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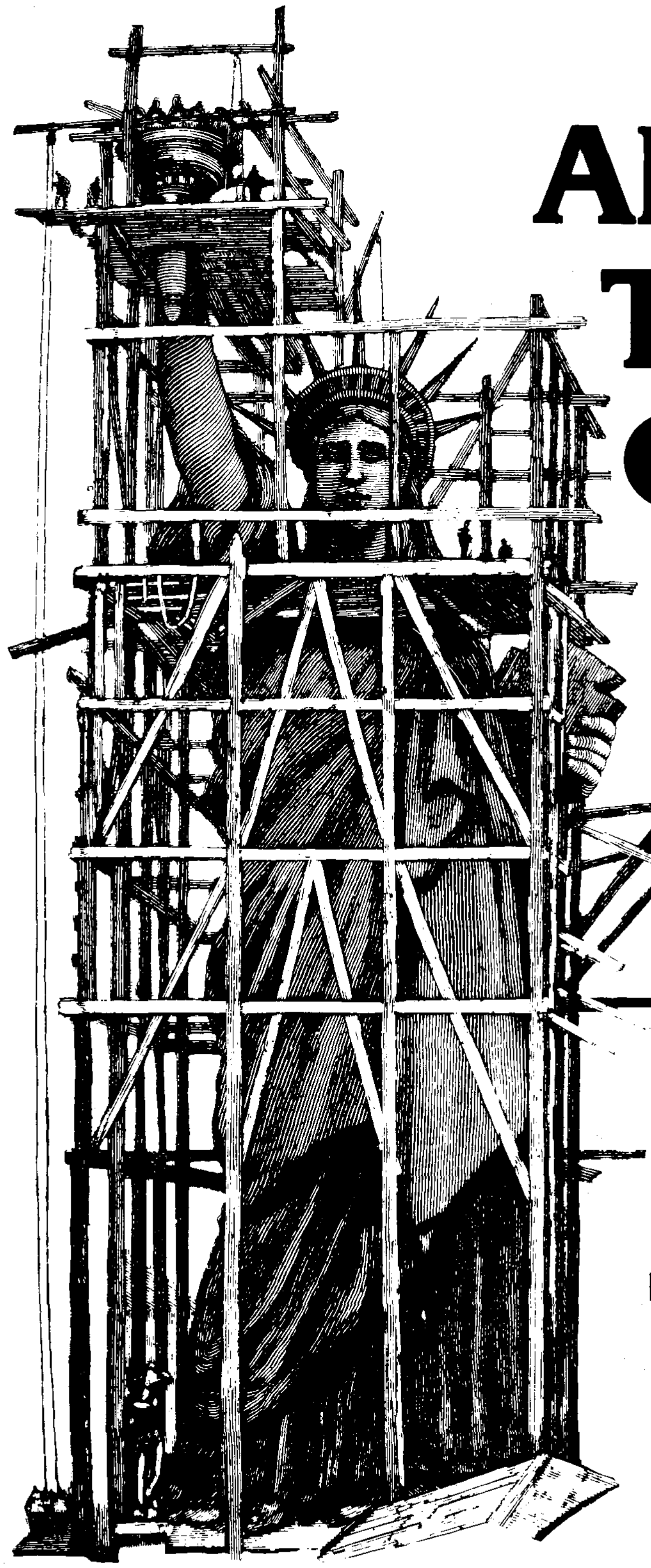

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REVIEW

Founded in 1815 Volume 264, Number 1 Spring 1979

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RATES:
$2.00 a copy; $8.00 a year in the U.S. and its possessions, $8.50 in Canada and Latin America; all others $9.00 a year.

Cover by John Colt.

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THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW [ISSN 0029-2397], Spring 1979, Vol. 264, No. 1. Published quarterly, in March, June, September, December by the University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Annual subscription rates: $8.00 in the United States and its possessions, $8.50 in Canada and Latin America, $9.00 in all other countries. Second class postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Copyright © 1979 by the University of Northern Iowa. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the permission of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage affixed. Claims for subscriber copies not received must be made within six months of date of publication. POSTMASTER: Return undeliverable copies to *The North American Review*, University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, the Humanities Index, Index to Little Magazines, Index of American Periodical Verse, the Book Review Index, and others. Member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM) and the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP). Back file volumes are available from AMS Reprint Company, 56 East 13th Street, New York, N.Y. 10003; article reprints and back file volumes in microform are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 or 18 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EJ. United States and Canadian newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

. . . ANOTHER MAN'S POISON

TAKING STOCK

The Upper Reaches of the Memory

I recently put a rowing machine up in my attic. It seemed the right place. In the event of flood warning, for example, I would want my dinghy up here, ready to float out the window. And while listening to the attic radio (Heathkit, 1953) and its flood warnings, I could be preparing for survival by practice and conditioning on the rowing machine.

Perhaps it was these thoughts of survival that led to rumination, to little paddlings of fantasy and remembrance. Or perhaps it was just the attic. Whichever, sitting in the stern of the rowing machine resting, head picturesquely bowed, shoulders hunched, I found myself taking stock. Or being taken stock of.

By rows and piles of books, long ago displaced from downstairs eminence and stored, like old folks. Summer clothes, occasional clothes. Among the latter the dark blue Hickey-Freeman formal overcoat I bought for a great occasion in 1950 and haven't worn since 1951, when I took it to France with me and attempted to sell it, but they wanted to buy only my jeans. The assortment of luggage from carry-ons to can't carry at all, in a heap under an ell, along with such standout strangers as a wagon-axle lamp, a foldable bed-board, the obligatory broken electric heater, several tattered Oriental rugs, and unused Sears sander in its carrying case . . . . Somewhere in there, I believe, is an old double-barreled shotgun once belonging to the Sheriff's force of Contra Costa county, California. I fired it once (one barrel) into a grove of trees I lived among. It took my breath away, plus a few hundred leaves. I had bought it for protection, but cannot recall from what. There are the boxes and crates, the containers that contained my bits and pieces on their journey here from California. They are sunshine yellow. Can it be eight years in Iowa? At the other end of the attic are paintings and drawings in stacks, an old easel, a portfolio of works by students, offered and accepted in little flare-ups of peace and goodwill. Across from them the deserted farm, the long tubular Grow-Lite still hanging over a scene of containers, buckets, bags of soil, sand and vermiculite, sprays, humidifier, pots — clay and plastic, aluminum pie plates, some bricks, packets of abandoned seedlings. When I stood and looked down at it, I might have been in a plane observing below what was left of a farm, in Oklahoma perhaps, in the years of the dust.

It is called staying in shape. If I am to stay in shape, I must come each day up into this attic. And wonder each day about the particular shape that has evolved; formed by itself over the years, and which I am to stay in.

Out of the attic window I can see the roof of my only close neighbor. I don't know him. We say hello across the zigzag rail fence when we're out gardening or shoveling snow. He had a son last year. I've never seen him, but there was a sign across the front of the house facing the street: "IT'S A BOY!" The only signs in my yard are put there at election times. He knows how I vote. I wonder what he got for Christmas. Did he make any resolutions for the new year? How would matters stand between us if he knew how I think? Suppose he stopped off at the fence on the way home from church and said How are you and I said Fine and he nodded and said We've got a lot to be thankful for. Suppose I didn't nod and he said Don't you agree? And I said, Well, the way I see it here in 1979, what we've got is Now. But Now is not three-dimensional. That's why people paint the way they do. We've got Me. But Me is not a relationship. So we live poor. We've got the anti-hero as hero. So we keep our eyes on the ground, or up an alley. We've got all kinds of change and no kind of time. We seem to be skating across the surface of our lives, with weak ankles. Don't you think so? Would he grunt as if I'd sneak-punched him? Would he get a grin together, tip his hat over it, and hurry off to his house, his wife and son? Or would he instead shake his head in slow comprehension and dawning admiration, and say, You know, I never thought of it like that. By golly, you're right, Mister. That's what we've got all right. Do you mind if I quote you to our pastor?

Attics are not merely quiet, they're remote. Not part of the living house. Still, patient, perhaps a touch haunted, perhaps a touch dangerous. I have heard it said that things speak, but of course they don't. They vibrate, they resonate, they cause vibrations and resonances. Perhaps they can be said to speak as music does. Their lightest touch can bring a hurtling of remembrance, of smells, of absolutely clear and perfectly particular moments, as if a mechanical device began of itself to play a tune known only to you, indeed playable only on your heartstrings and no other. My eyes were slowly fussing about the attic and saw this thing without taking any note of it, and yet note was taken. Something stirred in me. I looked back for cause and finally saw

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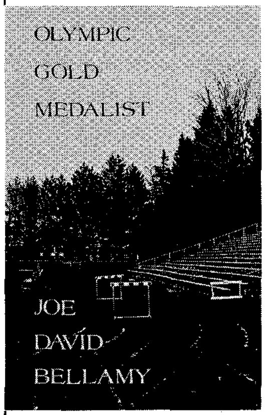

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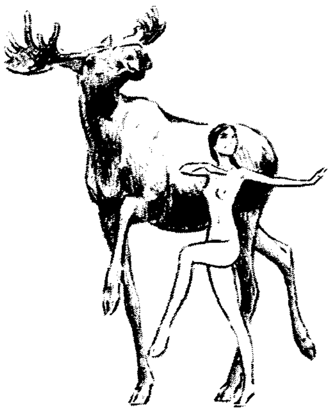

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City & State ____________________ Zip ________ a long black shoestring hanging out of a box. The shoestring was too long for any shoe I would wear, we would wear. Of course. My shoeskates were in that box. My skates. Immediately I saw the pond in Connecticut, I smelled the stove in the shack, tasted the Baby Ruths sold there, felt a breathtaking, a wretched pang as I saw the yellow hair of Virginia Palmer, saw us skating together (cross-handed, we were very good), saw her gone, ill and gone, leaving a feeling I'd never known, frightening because it felt far away and without an end. It was something like the feeling of a summer night, but worse.

E.B. White said he found nothing so sad as a summer's day. These things are bred into one. Early. As when I was too small to be allowed out after sunset. Our house faced east and I believe now I was cheated in the matter of actual sunset by my caretaker, an aging woman of a smarmy unpleasantness, busily ingratiating herself with my parents when they were home by loudly pursuing me throughout the house with bread crusts I had left at table. I didn't like the crusts. I didn't like not being able to put my elbows on the table when I ate, especially since her husband, who came to eat whenever my parents were absent, always put *his* elbows on the table.

The screened door clanged shut at the first onset of dark or of rain, as if held open only by the action of the sun. I could, nonetheless, still peer out. From our front porch. It was large, screened in all around, and, I seem to recall, unlit. Or do I only remember it as unlit? Deep and darkish, it faced down a slope of front lawn toward the street. It was too far to see anything clearly on the street, and there were other obstacles. The front of the house, right up against the porch, was banked with tall hedges of honeysuckle. From inside the porch, they were way over my head. That left the space of the sidewalk bisecting the hedge as my peering space. But as the eye rolled anxiously down the walk, it was blocked in part by a great oak at the bottom. The walk divided and went round it on both sides to the street.

One could see cars all right, though their make was not always distinguishable and one couldn't play the counting games, so many Fords versus so many Chevrolets versus so many La Salles which counted ten. Nor of course license plates. The occasional person strolling by or walking home from the end of the trolley line a quarter-mile away could be watched but not recognized from here, except for Mr. Comstock, who walked with two canes and whose feet pointed backwards instead of forwards. The occasional playmate swinging by I could recognize. The lucky dogs. What kind of parents did they have, anyway, letting them out after dark? What was it like to have parents like that? Billy Shields, for instance, was allowed to wear long pants. His mother was dead. I never remember being let into his house. He was the best runner, but he couldn't catch all that well. I'd yell to him from the darkened porch. He'd give me a kind of floppy wave. He couldn't see me, of course.

After dinner, usually with the joyless Genevieve, when I went back out onto the porch almost no one was going by. Not even cars. The crickets and lightning bugs had come up, and the smell from the honeysuckly hedge. I only noticed it at night, but then it was strong and heavy, pouring through the screens and filling the porch. I liked the smell in one way but it weighed on me, and it was sad. I didn't know why, or why the crickets were, out there in the grass I couldn't see. Even the lightning bugs were sad. You could see them but they didn't make any noise. They looked as if that turning on and off should make a noise. Just as you ought to be able to see at least *some* of the crickets if there were really thousands and thousands of them out there, as I was told, living right in our front yard and some around the sides and back.

Across the street, if you just looked straight across and not down, was the woods. Not that you could see any more than a bigger darkness part way up the sky. There were brooks in there, and violets, and a clay pit. And, Genevieve told me, snakes. *–Kenneth Lash*

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The Literary Life—Margaret Atwood on launching the German edition of **Surfacing.**

Fiction—New stories by Frederick Busch, William Penrod, Catherine Gammon, Janette T. Hospital, and others.

Poetry—New work by John Judson, Dave Smith, Carol Hebald, and Dara Wier.

Collaboration—Words and pictures by Guy Davenport and Roy R. Behrens.

A Note:

The editors are pleased to announce that "Civilization and Isolation," by Vine Deloria, has been selected for inclusion in **The Pushcart Prize, IV: Best of the Small Presses.** The article was first printed in the Spring 1978 number of the NAR.

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SCOTT EDWARDS

POLITICAL HEROES AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

> Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.
>
> . . . .
>
> And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.
>
> —John F. Kennedy, 1961

How far are we now from a world in which words like these could seem noble and just? John Kennedy meant to be seen as tough and pragmatic, but for all that, the mood to which he appealed was a mood of hope not much tempered by regard for some of the harder outlines of political reality. It seemed to many in those days that the country at last belonged to *us*, to the young, the beautiful, and the bright, and that *they*, the chairmen of the board, had been sent down from their places of power; that it was possible now to dissolve old entanglements and set new courses. The distance between 1961 and 1979 is the distance between public feelings like these and public feelings that appear to have left in them hardly a trace of idealism or of sympathy with politics as a means of hitching ideals to Acts of Congress. By the growing weakness of the major parties, by the tax revolts now in prospect everywhere, by the widespread mistrust of "big government," by the general decline in voting—indeed, by almost any measure we choose—sheer hostility to politics has become a political force to be reckoned with.

It may be wondered whether very much is new in this, considering there has always been a large part of the potential American electorate that takes no notice of politics and seems to care not at all about what the government does. Twenty or so years ago, "apathetic" was the label regularly attached to this group, but nowadays it is common to divide it in two, distinguishing between those who are "left out" and those who are alienated or, in a more popular phrase, "turned off." The left-outs are excluded from the political system not through choice, but because their levels of income and schooling are so low as to deprive them of any motive to be political men. They get nothing from politics and expect nothing from it, being too poorly integrated into society to care about its wrongs or to be active in any attempt to abolish them. The turned-offs are nonparticipants voluntarily and on principle. They are middle class and conscious of what they do, withholding their contributions and staying home on election day partly out of being irritated with politicians and weary of them, and partly out of the belief that to choose not to act is to "send them a message."

The novelty of our present situation is that considerable new levies are supposed to have been added to this second group. Here is a thought deeply unsettling to politicians, many of whom have begun to see "apathy" under the aspect of middle-class protest, as a calculated withdrawal by large numbers of people who *are* political beings when they choose to be and whose opinions count for something because they are the stuff that trends and movements are made of. The thought is less unsettling to opinion-makers of various sorts, who, on the conviction that "turned off" is what we ought to be, appear to take a kind of joy in it. Publicists and professors have grown fond of reminding us that nonvoting is a political act: what if they hold an election and no one shows up? With such questions we have gone beyond mere criticism and entered the realm of antipolitics.

The reasons for this mood of hostility seem as palpable as the mood itself. Vietnam and Watergate, fifteen years of undeclared war and of high crimes and misdemeanors, have made the public wary of adventures in foreign affairs and inclined them to think that politicians lie all of the time instead of just some of the time. This is an obvious view of the matter and, in a sense, a correct one. Yet it is not adequate. For to trace our present political state of mind to Vietnam and Watergate alone is to overlook tendencies in American life that have strong bearing on that state of mind but that were active before the first Marines manned the perimeter at Da Nang and before the hand-delivered satchel stuffed with cash became a universal symbol of politics-as-usual in Washington.

In a fundamental way, we think differently now than we used to about our public men, and, what is more important, we *feel* differently about them. I mean this about politicians in general, but especially about Presidents. I remember how it was, growing up in the 1940s: Roosevelt dominated my awakening political consciousness, seeming eternally The President by some necessary and beneficent law of nature. I simply could not imagine anyone else addressing joint sessions of Congress, touring the front, or meeting with Churchill and Stalin to settle things for the rest of the world. Nor, as I remember, could any of my classmates. Parents and teachers had only praise for F.D.R., and the professors I met later on never spoke of him in any but reverential terms. It was only out of class and in books not on the assigned list that I ever heard things Roosevelt had said or done detracted from in such a way as to make me believe the detraction. He possessed, or so it seemed to us then, a wisdom and a courage almost beyond the human. If he remained the most skillful of politicians, the politician side of his character, like his physical disability, was hidden from view, dimmed by the brilliance of the ideal Roosevelt who appeared before us in the Saturday newsreel.

Roosevelt might of course be regarded as an exceptional case. Yet, making allowances for changed times and the different characters of the men, we can see that Eisenhower and Kennedy were also politicians who, in the eyes of the public, surpassed the normal standards of being and doing and therefore got translated from politics to a higher realm. It made headlines in the late '50s when a student called Eisenhower an "old futzer." No doubt the epithet had a certain pungency in academic quarters, but nearly everywhere else such things shocked and displeased. There was a simple refusal to believe that he lied about the spy planes and bungled the peace initiatives of the last year of his administration. Long after his retirement the polls still showed he could best any opponent in a race for the White House. Kennedy, it was said, had bearing and decisiveness and could read twelve hundred words a minute. He had "grace under pressure." The public was eager to grant him specialness, and began doing so close upon his inauguration, if we may judge by the ease with which he came away almost untouched from a misstep as serious as the Bay of Pigs, even gaining credit for manfulness and honesty in owning to his mistakes.

No politician could count nowadays on enjoying such favor. Our passion for heroes has failed, and the failure is a singularly important political fact, because the public scheme in the United States has always given particular play to hero-worship. To lose the aptitude for it is to lose a quality essentially American. This is the reason, if we are to see our present disenchantments in their true light, that we must understand what has been the place in our politics of the politician-hero and why we seem no longer able to create his legend.

Let me offer a premise. The idea of the heroic pervades the archetypal events of our public life up to 1865: America's break with England, the making of the Constitution, the ordering of the early republic, and the Civil War are scarcely intelligible apart from it. Here I deliberately use *heroic* in its original sense and, in doing so, intend to suggest a parallel between the meaning of politics in ancient republics and democracies and the meaning of American politics in its most formative stages. The question is, What are the moral requirements of popular government? They are not easy to see in modern examples of the type, but ancient ones, just because heroes and herohood are so much a part of their make-up, show them with striking clearness.

The Greek heroic tradition had a long history before there was any Greek democracy, but its ideals were thoroughly congenial to the democratic constitution and to the variations of it that Athens developed in the fifth and fourth centuries. The hero was a model of human perfection; his deeds marked the limits of personal glory, setting out the hard lines of true achievement so that all could see them. In an aristocracy such a model might be preserved for a few, but in a democracy it had to be kept ever before the mind's eye of the general citizenry. This was indispensable to the popular constitution, for if heroic deeds could not be done by ordinary men, they nevertheless showed ordinary men what was deserving of praise and spurred them to imitation. Aristotle makes it clear that the heroic ideal is the foundation of Athenian political order: the *polis* exists not for the sake of life alone but for the sake of the good life, the substance of which is the performing of noble and beautiful actions. In Athens, democracy and heroism were twin parts of a single communal practice, and all the stories of great men were standing injunctions to an excellence that could be attained only through acts witnessed and judged by the citizen body. To be praised in one's lifetime by one's equals and to secure a place in the memory of those who come after must be the aim of every noble character; in a democracy, they must be the aim of every citizen. The genius of Athenian politics was to create a stage on which such ends could be pursued and, by some, achieved. It is the chief glory of our city, says Pericles, that she recognizes virture and rewards it with public esteem.

In showing citizens how to act as "the best" would act, the Greek heroic tradition showed them how to *be* citizens. From this essential experience of Western man we may derive an axiom of political theory: popular forms of government need to foster heroic ideals in order to educate the public to its proper role. A popular regime depends on ordinary people in a way no other kind of regime does. Its day-to-day affairs are in the hands of citizens, and, when the time comes, it is citizens who do the fighting. But ability in these things comes from training, and not just training in "how to do it" but, much more, in how to know the difference between those actions that are worthy and those that are not. All who have written on the

SCOTT EDWARDS is on the political science faculty at California State College, Hayward.

subject since the Greeks agree that popular governments find their strength in a public rightly schooled to the tasks of citizenship. Machiavelli and Montesquieu both insist that the mainspring of republics is "virtue." By this they mean courage and manly capacity, but also, and above all, public-mindedness, a quality very far from being natural and one that requires the constant force of example. In free states, citizens are educated to their part, not either born or compelled to it; and what most needs teaching in such states is the desire to emulate great men.

It is just here that we may see the influence of ancient models on things American. Always impatient of the past, Americans have been a people anti-traditional in their deepest spirit. Yet there is one tradition that has taken strong root here: Americans believe in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as miracles of wisdom whose light shines undimmed and unchanged from one generation to another; and side by side with this belief they have created heroes whose legends have given form to the American political self-image. I refer of course to the founding fathers, a band with a membership not precisely defined but that includes at least Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson. These are at any rate the founders as they have existed in popular imagining, the authors of the Declaration and the Constitution, even if Washington was busy fortifying New York in July of 1776 and Jefferson was in Paris rather than Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. To their company the public long ago admitted Lincoln, no doubt the greatest politician-hero of them all, as a founder in spirit.

If we examine this tradition together with its encrustations of myth and anecdote, we see that it presents a heroic ideal not very different in its effect upon the minds of citizens from the heroic ideal of the ancients. Up to 1865, there is a constant playing upon heroic themes, especially on the theme that the true measure of public men, and even of ordinary citizens, is how posterity shall judge of their acts. Consider the city of Washington: with its enormous monuments and Arlington across the river, it is a place intended to preserve certain memories; indeed, as Philippe Ariès has said, it presents a study in the funeral cult of the hero.[1] Or consider the carefully wrought words of some of our founder-heroes on occasions that really mattered and that therefore disclose inner meanings. Addressing his mutinous officers at Newburgh in 1783, Washington appeals to the most aboriginal of heroic motives—the fear of dishonor and the desire to achieve a kind of immortality in the memory of the yet unborn. Turn away, he says, from those who would "overthrow the liberties of our Country" and "you will . . . afford occasion for Posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to Mankind, 'had this day been wanting, the World had never seen the last state of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.' "[2] And when Lincoln invokes the "mystic chords of memory"; when he reminds his fellow citizens that "the firey trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation"; when, at Gettysburg, he calls to remembrance the devotion of those who have fallen, we are at no great distance from similar scenes and similar purposes in Athens during the last part of the fifth century.

Considering what the founding generation had read, and considering the awareness they had of setting out on a political course which though new yet recalled what free men had done in the past, we should not be surprised to discover that public life in America up to the end of the Civil War expressed the democratic-republican ideals of classical and Roman times. *Novus ordo saeculorum* is, after all, a phrase borrowed from Virgil. But with the coming of the new industrial order, this classical parallel no longer holds. In a society dedicated to getting and spending, such habits of thought could no more be sustained in politics than they could in architecture or education. Although the tradition of the founder-heroes waxes strong and serves useful political purposes between 1865 and 1900, not a single politician of that period himself meets the standard for hero-hood. This reflects not diminished political talent, but changed opportunities and, above all, changed tastes in a people who now found life's essential drama elsewhere than in the public realm. As Lord Bryce notably remarked, great men are not chosen President, because they are not drawn to politics, there being ampler fields for harvest in trade, manufacture, and finance. It is only with the twentieth century that the American politician-hero again appears, and in much altered dress.

What distinguishes the politician-hero of the twentieth century from the heroes of the founding myth? It is that his fame, in a way quite impossible in the case of the latter, arises out of publicity as a force independent of politics. Genius, opportunity, and fortune continue to play their part, but for going on a hundred years it has been clear that the first requisite for success in American politics is to have a right way of appearing before the public. The politician who has recognized this fact and made the most of it is the one who has been able to put together powerful coalitions of voters and to stake out large claims on public affection. In the process, he has made of himself a figure not quite to be measured by ordinary standards—that is to say, a politician-hero. Among Presidents, the two Roosevelts, Wilson, Eisenhower, and Kennedy undoubtedly belong to this group, and it would not be difficult to give a half dozen more names if the notion of hero-hood were extended to include some just short of the first rank. William Jennings Bryan, Robert La Follette, and Adlai Stevenson would all belong on such a list; Wendell Willkie, Thomas E. Dewey, and George McGovern would not. Surely, the vagaries of public sentiment are at work here, but about those who become heroes it must be said that they always possess what since the Kennedy years we have been in the rather tiresome habit of calling "charisma." However worn the word, it is doubtful whether anyone lacking the qualities it refers to can nowadays achieve prominence in public life.

The key to attaining heroic stature has been the ability

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[1] Ariès, Philippe, *Western Attitudes toward Death*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

[2] *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-44), XXVI, p. 227.

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to play to a national audience in moral symbols familiar and pleasing to it. Theodore Roosevelt presented himself as cowboy, Rough Rider, explorer, and patriot; Woodrow Wilson was the principled, self-sacrificing, and, above all, nonpartisan defender of democratic ideals; and F.D.R. was the aristocratic champion of the little man against the economic royalists. I do not at all wish to suggest that these were merely poses, for it seems to me that the politician-hero's public manner, however studied it may be, always reveals the inner man with some fidelity. But I do wish to suggest that the way heroic figures conduct themselves touches something in the scheme of common wants that is at bottom parapolitical or, it may be, prepolitical: a need to be flattered, or entertained, or titillated, or protected, or even loved. If we could draw a curve showing the influence of the merely personal in American politics, its trend would be ever upward from the start of the century until now, more sharply so after 1960. Sheer charm was a larger element in Franklin Roosevelt's power than in Wilson's and larger in Kennedy's than in that of any who had gone before.

With Kennedy, indeed, Presidential politics becomes openly and rather proudly a matter of "style." The public was captivated by the Camelot legend and by the swinging, show-business atmosphere that prevailed in the Kennedy circle; by the artful presentation of the President as lover-of-poetry, Chief of the Irish Mafia, and touch-football aficionado. The image-making machines whirred and spun ceaselessly, and it seemed for a time in the early '60s as though they could produce nothing that did not at once enchant and delight. Not so for those who came after. Chance and policy and scandal had a good deal to do with this change, but so did failures of style, or what were seen as failures by a great many people whose business it is to influence the opinions of other people both about what a proper political style is and about who possesses it. Johnson's southern accent and country-bred manner made him a target for the gibes and condescensions of reporters and professors. Put next to Kennedy, he seemed vain and foolish, a bumpkin at the faculty seminar or, in the last stages of his tenure, a power-mad Augustus. The most solid of liberals himself, he never got much credit from liberals for being what in fact he was: a President abler than Kennedy had been to deliver programs that were at least moderately progressive. As for Nixon, his furtiveness and habit of letting his nerves show always gave him a bad press. If Kennedy was brilliantly successful at image-projecting, similar attempts on the part of the next two incumbents often looked like a cover for ineptitude and self-doubt. Johnson as a cowboy and Texas-style paterfamilias, Nixon as football fan and surprise guest on prime-time entertainment shows notably failed to beguile.

Both the heroes of the young Republic and those of the twentieth century have powerfully shaped the American political mind, but the influences are easier to see in the case of the older group than of the newer. This is because to venerate the founding heroes and to keep their myths alive has until recently been a principal aim of American education. Beginning with *My First Reader* the curriculum has drawn heavily on the lives and doings of great men, and the classroom has been in some part a shrine, with its bust of Lincoln behind every teacher's desk and its portrait of Washington over every blackboard. The forced memorizings of patriotic oratory, the essay-writing and speech-giving contests on what it means to be an American, the Friday assemblies ringing with "America The Beautiful" and "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" have aimed at imparting to the young a sense of fellow-citizenship with those who, in Jefferson's phrase, "laid the foundations of public happiness."

There is of course nothing extraordinary in any of this. From the first it was taken for granted that how to be an American needed to be taught, seeing that it was, after all, a new vocation in the world. When the movement to establish public schools began in earnest, it was only natural that training for citizenship should be its prime motive. What could have been nearly so important in a nation more than half of whose school-age children were, in the first decade of this century, either immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants? And in a country where the first principle of civics was to maintain a "wall of separation" between church and state, it was all the more necessary that figures invested with a kind of secular divinity be presented to the people in order to make up for the buttressing power denied the Constitution through the loss of miracle and mystery. The Republic, just because it was a republic, had to cultivate heroes; and for this purpose stories about the founders were a fruitful source of precept and example.

The politician-heroes of the twentieth century have enjoyed no comparable place in the public-school curriculum; creating their fame has been the work of newspapers, radio, and television rather than of the classroom. If this means that the process of hero-making has been in their case less deliberate, it remains true that they have contributed to American political self-understanding equally with the founding heroes, and have fostered a tradition of their own. But this tradition too has failed: the distinguishing mark of our present political state of mind is that we have cut our ties with heroic traditions both old and new and of whatever type. It is hard not to see this as an important change in political order, for there is a great difference between an American polity able to create and maintain heroes and one not able to do so. What argues most strongly for the significance of the change is that it comes out of prior changes in education, which is the surest touchstone of the tendencies really at work in a free society. The changes I mean are evident everywhere in our grammar schools and high schools, but since their original and continuing source is higher education, a discussion of them properly begins with the academy.

Let me put the case shortly. In the teaching of American culture, history, and politics the academy has for a long time sponsored interpretations not very likely to build republican virtue in the people who accept them. Taken together, these interpretations constitute what I call "the academic critique," by which I mean a critical philosophy that holds sway in fields like American history and literaure—and in sociology, psychology, and political science insofar as they touch on things American—fields to which almost everyone who gets a B.A. degree is "exposed" at some time or other. A student taking the introductory course in any of these subjects is likely to hear that, despite two hundred years of equalitarian rhetoric, the most important fact about American society is its suppression of minorities; that the Constitution was made by the privileged classes only to protect the interests of those classes; that American literature has been dominated by the influence, mostly harmful, of the Puritan tradition; that all received values are dominated by the influence, entirely harmful, of the Protestant ethic; that American foreign policy is imperialist to the core; that the country is owned and run by the élites of corporate capitalism; and that there is no democracy here worthy of the name, nor ever has been. I list these propositions as representative and, for the sake of brevity, put them in their barest form, even if this does not do them full justice. I do take issue with them, but without suggesting they are entirely wrong. Let me propose that they are partly right, adding two things only: first, they are one-sided; second, they are typical of what has been taught to undergraduates in American colleges over the last twenty-five years, and taught with great emphasis.

It may perhaps be answered that the academic critique lies within a venerable classroom tradition which calls for a deliberate purging of young minds: students are to be shaken out of their small-town and suburban verities, to have the scales lifted from their eyes, to be brought face to face with things-as-they-are. How better to accomplish a baptism of the innocents than by turning upside down everything that (one guesses) they have heard until now? But the academic critique is not presented as a theory or an argument or a point of view; it is presented as truth, or, at the least, as resting on the authority of science and scholarship. It is much more than just a flaying of pretense and orthodoxy. It is an exercise in indoctrination. Freedom, property, hard work, individualism, the drive for material success, whatever qualifies as a "typically American" value is held to be either wrong-headed in itself or worthy but unrealized: capitalism is simply bad; representative democracy may be good, but it has never really been tried. There is little inside the academy to challenge or balance such views, and not very much outside of it either, seeing that quite similar ideas have taken possession of minds everywhere.

Does this matter? I think it does. Higher education today is mass education, and if we suppose that going to college affects what one thinks, we must suppose that there are large numbers of men and women in the United States who have heard the academic critique put forward and who carry its teachings with them as a permanent part of their mental furniture. Taught law, said Mr. Justice Holmes, is tough law. The same applies to history, to politics, and to culture: what we are told by our teachers has a remarkable inertia and a remarkable ability to repel the contrary. In the present case, this means that we fairly abound in people who are well educated by prevailing standards and well able to function as entrepreneurs, managers, teachers, civil servants, and the like, who in fact belong to a privileged class, but who are ill equipped to think in a balanced way about the course of public affairs or to understand much about the origins and meaning of political order in the United States.

But the academic critique by no means exhausts its influence in the academy. In a diffuse and simplified form it has filtered down to the lower schools, mixing with the air students breathe at every level. The freshman nowadays arrives at college with few ideals to be swept away; and many a professor, straining like a hound in the slips to be about the business of debunking and demystifying, finds there is almost nothing left to do on this line. Unhappily, along with the ideals has gone the base on which there might be erected any real knowledge of the American past, or of the functioning of American institutions. It is not overdrawing the case to say that the greatest number of people schooled in the United States since World War II have been fairly left in ignorance about these subjects.

What our schools have taught us to do is to see through things; but to see through everything is to miss what is really there. Let the case of the founding heroes stand in illustration. If we think at all about Washington, it is only to remember that he padded his expense account and would never have beaten the British without French help; about Franklin, that he authored some tiresome moral sayings but had a good time at the French Court; about Jefferson, that he had a slave mistress and fathered bastards; about Lincoln, that he did not consider black men his social equals and was not passionate in the cause of abolition. Such pieces of information may be factually correct, but, given and received in the way they are, they become simplisms and help to cultivate a certain simplicity in the public mind. It is a signal achievement of education in the United States to have created enormous audiences for a new pop-culture genre, the television "docu-drama." "Washington Behind Closed Doors," "The Missiles of October," and "Tail-Gunner Joe" are examples of the type, as are recent TV films on General MacArthur, Franklin and Eleanor, and journalists blacklisted in the 1950s, to mention only those I can immediately recall. These shows are entertainment, to be sure; yet the feeling persists that those who produce and appear in them harbor thoughts of uplifting and educating the people, of instructing all of us about how things really are. "Roots" or "the phenomenon of 'Roots,' " as television critics are wont to describe it, is the archetype here. The significant thing is that television should address itself to such themes at all. That it does so suggests the existence of a large public, educated in public schools and at public expense, whose understanding of American history does not rise above the level of the comic book.

For most of us—surely for all but a fraction of the electorate—television is the main access to the past and the main source of ideas about public affairs. Of all the facts affecting American politics in the 1970s, this is probably the most important. But we should not think of it as an essentially new fact, for it marks only the latest stage in a process, underway since the turn of the century, by which technology and social change have undermined the institutional basis of politics. Although television has quickened, it did not start this process whose beginnings are contemporary with the high-speed press and newspapers that reach hundreds of thousands, contemporary with the appearance of instruments capable to some degree of *creating* the public temper.

Where the resulting institutional decay shows most plainly is in the political party. Traditional politics, by which I mean the politics of contending groups and ideologies invented in Western Europe and America over the last two centuries, used the party as a school of apprenticeship in which to test the fitness of those who aspired to power, in part by subjecting them to every variety of temptation. American parties nowadays are not very good for this purpose, because there are too many paths open that invite the talented (and the lucky) to bypass the slow tutelage of party politics. The party was once also the main agency for organizing the public; but American parties are no longer agencies of this kind, because the public is no longer stable enough in what it thinks and feels to be formed into coherent and reliable blocs. There is more here than just the breakdown of party apparatus and party creeds; there is the breakdown of the party mentality, of the people's readiness to be organized at all by any apparatus or creed. These facts stand out more clearly with each election and with each set of statistics showing a decline in "party identification," a decline that is by now a true calamity for the Republicans.

What remains of politics in the old style is the politics of special interests. This goes on pretty much in its usual way—though, one has the feeling, with ever greater skill, efficiency, and clout. For the rest we have the politics of shifting and temporary publics, which, owing to the influence of television, really is conducted on novel lines. Naturally, it is a politics without much by way of tradition, and so without much by way of standards; in form and in fact it is a kind of entertainment. We hear this said so often nowadays that we perhaps don't think enough about what it means. It means that the politician's chief concern is to shape his public person after models supplied by advertisers, pollsters, and performers; that public words and actions are addressed not to public principles but to private tastes, to the likes and dislikes roused in consumers by the image-making industry; that a smile, a manner, a way-of-seeming become decisive movers of men. Like the culture it mirrors, our politics has come to celebrate the private and the personal and the intimate as the only true source of human value, and to nourish the belief that happiness may be had by satisfying appetites. It makes personal circumstance such as the "identity problem" of the wrongdoer or misfit, or a feeling like *love* or *compassion,* into the criterion of public acts, while it empties public values of their meaning: duty, loyalty, civility, self-restraint, the idea of the common good lose their power to compel.

Although politics-as-entertainment did not exist full blown until the 1960s, the habits of thought and action that prefigure it (I stress once again) go back to the nineteenth century; and it is just these habits that have been the making of the politician-hero so familiar in the twentieth. But there is a paradox here. A politics less and less tied to institutions while appealing more and more to subjectivities once worked to create heroes; now, since the mid-'60s, it works to destroy them. Why has this reversal taken place? The tendencies in education already described have a good deal to do with it; debunking and demystifying, when they become widespread and habitual, unhorse the prospective hero before he can get fairly started. And if we use the Kennedy years as our measure, we can see that there has been a change in the outlook of those who control the engines of publicity, that they have a new awareness of being able by dint of *their* actions alone to confer political success or to withhold it. To explain why public affections were until the mid-'60s largely congenial to heroes but are now uncongenial to them would require a study of why the holders of immediate power to influence public attitudes use this power the way they do. But this is a long study; let me rest content with a simpler point: the presence or absence of heroes in the public realm depends rather more on matters of feeling than of fact. Wars and depressions, it is true, are likely to produce heroes, but what is necessary and sufficient to produce them is a popular mood favorable to hero-hood.

WAYNE ZADE

THE DROWNED MAN

As if you sat in a green chair,
as if your every action were being watched—
the water that clear; until they find your name,
sewn into clothes like stars.

Political education—and this takes in not only the lessons taught in school but also the media-bath in which we are all submerged all the time—works nowadays to dissipate any public willingness or openness favorable to heroes. Here is the principal reason we have none just now. The decline of the politician-hero is very much a matter of having educated a great many people to believe that some things are simply so: that politics is inevitably corrupt; that democracy is a sham; that every attempt to do justice only adds to the sum of injustice; that we are without power to rear the fabric of public happiness. It is a matter, in short, of having decisively shaped the common view of reality. Certain thoughts now possess us, and this mental fact has everything to do with politics and the possibilities of politics. □

GARY SOTO

THREE POEMS

Concha

This place
Where we lived
Is not far
From your heart.
No! Behind
Your eyes I'm here
Again, a child
In a blue dress,
A chicken under
My arm. My
Brother Jorge
Is at the window
Burning a spider
With a match.
He rubs it between
His palms
And slicks his hair
For good luck.
And I believe
In luck and cross
Myself in the name
Of the goat
Whose little beard
I cut and pasted
To my breasts.
I want a hand
To read them
Like braille
Of the story
That begins and ends
At sea, a story
That takes me
Wave over wave,
Salting me
For the long haul
To my next life.

*

Mother is at
The table, counting
The carrots that go
In a soup.
1,2,3 . . .
She is crazy, I think.

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She drools into
A pail, coughs
Into a cup, and drinks.
Her hands are roots
From the garden,
Her smile a slash
In a pig's belly.
I kiss her
And ask about
The chicken.
She nods *Yes*.
I take it out
To the yard, snap
Its neck, and
Under my arm
Press it
Like an accordion
Until the blood
Is flowing
From its beak
And a wine for the dogs.
When I come in
Swinging the chicken
Like a lantern,
Mother is at
The table, counting
1,2,3 . . .

*

Father is a pillow
Tied to a broom
And leaning against
The wall, I
Punch it, saying
Where are you
Now, you drunk.
I knife him
With a fork
Where his heart
Might be, and
Imagine him on all
Fours, discovering
Something more
Than blood and a run
Of 5 fingers.
Of course, this
Never happens.
He is beyond
Us, an arcade
For the ant,
A curled negative
In the eyes
Of a lamp,
His hat is now
A pail for the goat,
His coat a flag
We wave at supper,
He is gone,
And I'm here
Behind your closed
Eyes. When they
Open, see how
I'm smiling.

Angel

Tonight I find the
Calendar with its days
Marked like targets.
It has to do with
The rationed water
Falling from the North
And my woman asleep,
Legs pushed up to her
Veined breasts, heavy
And tilting with child.
She turns to expose
The belly rising
—not pure and rubbed white—
But tangled in TV
And telephone poles
Howling through boredom,
My hands canoeing
Throat to her dark peaked
In kinks and the wet
That is both ours,
I think of the day
When this child will kick
His joints into place
And the eyes circle
Points of clarity.
Already the fingers bloom
Like candles, the hair
Parts in a warm flow,
And the pocked buttocks
Are globed with fat
For what lies years off.
I know this, somehow,
Though it is July,
Weeks before our dark
One slides like water
Into light, his hands
Tightening on air
Or the cord that links
One life so he should
Turn beyond knowing
To what is both his.

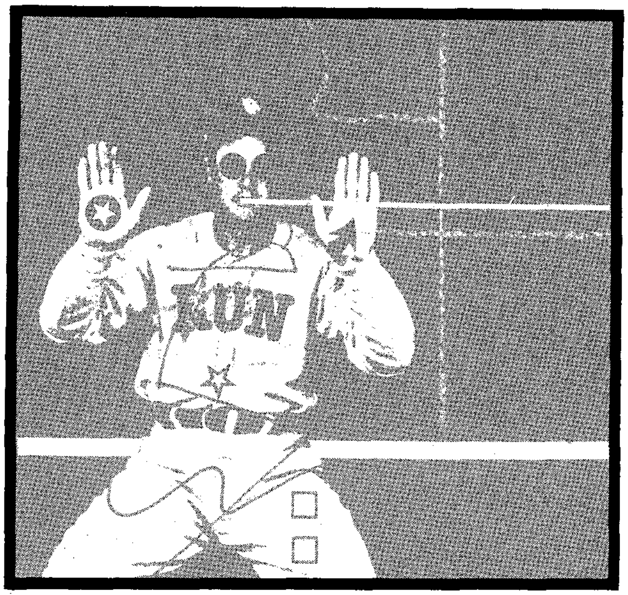
The Thirtieth Year

for Buckley

In that year, the gift
Is this: you start up
A trail of night-shade,
Crow leaves, fiddleneck,
Fir and the stooped Oaks
Of Turin, a trail
That shifts from loose dirt
To grasses, and back
Again to its source—
The snarled foothills
Of sequoia. Here
Wind solves a broken
Puzzle of footprints
And takes the dark moons
Of sweat under each arm,
Leaving only salt
That runs to your wrists.
You lick them to keep
What you lose from within.

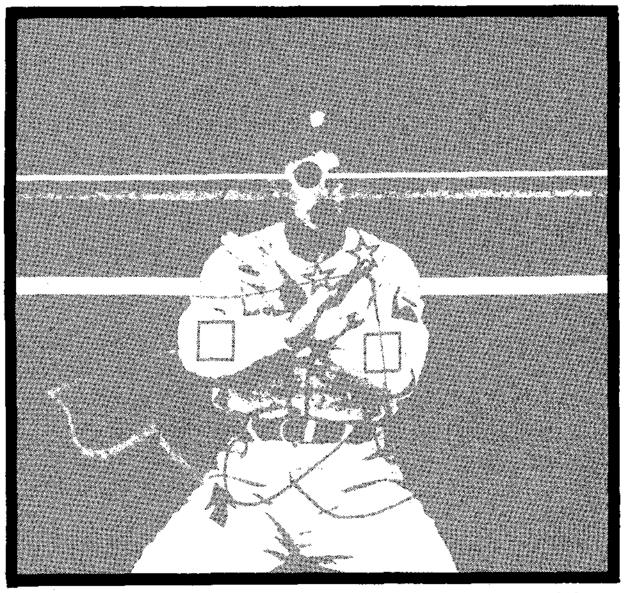
At mid-day you stop
To eat. And this world
Stops. Woodpecker
Thumps for insects,
Raccoon for berries,
And close by flies hang
On a dead animal,
Its black fur slouching
Over ribcage, spine.
You lie in the shade
Of granite banked high
And tilting earthward,
Granite that holds you
To discover a wildness
Far from the heart. You
Sleep to the long and
Short traffic of bees.

When you wake and start
The climb again, the
Sun lost to the clouds,
You find a tall tree
Felled by storm, its trunk
A splintered bench
For weariness,
You stoop to a fire
Struck from its good wood.
In this light the rings
Open with the years
Orbiting the dark
Heart of a late birth.
Count them. They are yours.



the pitcher

andre dubus



Roy Behrens

They cheered and clapped when he and Lucky Ferris came out of the dugout, and when the cheering and clapping settled to sporadic shouts he had already stopped hearing it, because he was feeling the pitches in his right arm and watching them the way he always did in the first few minutes of his warm-up. Some nights the fast ball was fat or the curve hung or the ball stayed up around Lucky's head where even the hitters in this Class C league would hit it hard. It was a mystery that frightened him. He threw the first hard one and watched it streak and rise into Lucky's mitt; and the next one; and the next one; then he wasn't watching the ball anymore, as though it had the power to betray him. He wasn't watching anything except Lucky's target, hardly conscious of that either, or of anything else but the rhythm of his high-kicking windup, and the ball not thrown but released out of all his motion; and now he felt himself approaching that moment which he could not achieve alone: a moment that each time was granted to him. Then it came: the ball was part of him, as if his arm stretched sixty feet six inches to Lucky's mitt and slammed the ball into leather and sponge and Lucky's hand. Or he was part of the ball.

Now all he had to do for the rest of the night was concentrate on prolonging that moment. He had trained himself to do that, and while people talked about his speed and curve and change of pace and control, he knew that without his concentration they would be only separate and useless parts; and instead of nineteen and five on the year with an earned run average of two point one five and two hundred and six strikeouts, going for his twentieth win on the last day of the season, his first year in professional ball, three months short of his twentieth birthday, he'd be five and nineteen and on his way home to nothing. He was going for the pennant too, one half game behind the New Iberia Pelicans who had come to town four nights ago with a game and a half lead, and the Bulls beat them Friday and Saturday, lost Sunday, so that now on Monday in this small Louisiana town, Billy's name was on the front page of the local paper alongside the news of the war that had started in Korea a little over a month ago. He was ready. He caught Lucky's throw, nodded to him, and walked with head down toward the dugout and the cheers growing louder behind it, looking down at the bright grass, holding the ball loosely in his hand.

He spoke to no one. He went to the far end of the dugout that they left empty for him when he was pitching. He was too young to ask for that, but he was good enough to get it without asking; they gave it to him early in the year, when they saw he needed it, this young pitcher Billy Wells who talked and joked and yelled at the field and the other dugout for nine innings of the three nights he didn't

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ANDRE DUBUS is a frequent contributor to the NAR. "The Pitcher" is included in a new collection of sports stories from Harcourt.

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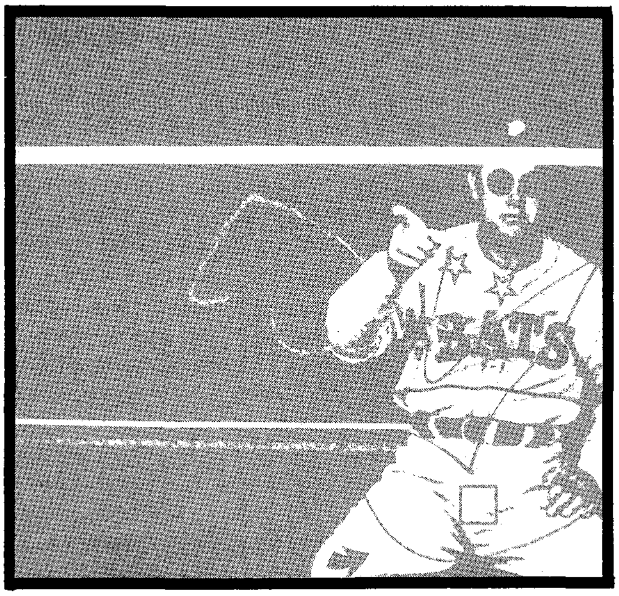
pitch, but on his pitching night sat quietly, looking neither relaxed nor tense, and only spoke when politeness required it. Always he was polite. Soon they made a space for him on the bench, where he sat now knowing he would be all right. He did not think about it, for he knew as the insomniac does that to give it words summons it up to dance; he knew that the pain he had brought with him to the park was still there; he even knew it would probably always be there; but for a good while now it was gone. It would lie in wait for him and strike him again when he was drained and had a heart full of room for it. But that was a long time from now, in the shower or back in the hotel, longer than the two and a half hours or whatever he would use pitching the game; longer than a clock could measure. Right now it seemed a great deal of his life would pass before the shower. When he trotted out to the mound they stood and cheered and, before he threw his first warm-up pitch, he tipped his cap.

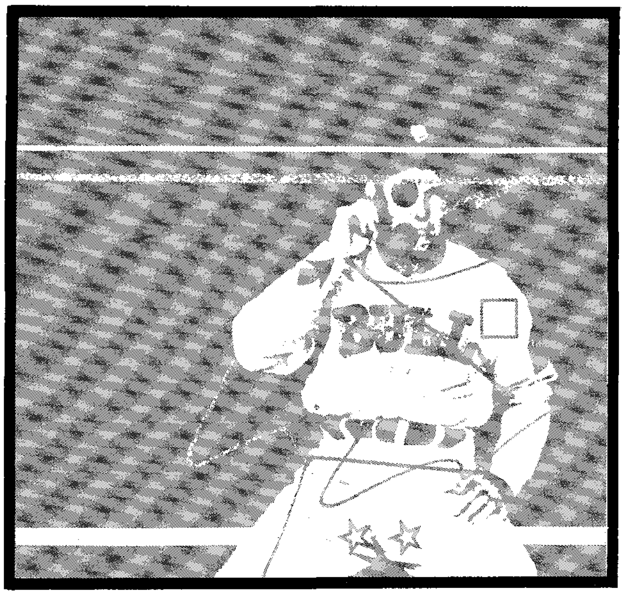


He did not make love to Leslie the night before the game. All season, he had not made love to her on the night before he pitched. He did not believe, as some ballplayers did, that it hurt you the next day. *It's why they call it the box score anyway*, Hap Thomas said on the bus one night after going hitless; *I left me at least two basehits in that whorehouse last night*. Like most ballplayers in the Evangeline League, Thomas had been finished for a long time: a thirty-six year old outfielder who had played three seasons — not consecutively — in Triple A ball, when he was in his twenties. Billy didn't make love the night before a game because he still wasn't used to night baseball; he still had the same ritual he'd had in San Antonio, playing high school and American Legion ball: he drank a glass of buttermilk then went to bed, where for an hour or more he imagined tomorrow's game, although it seemed the game already existed somewhere in the night beyond his window and was imagining him. When finally he slept, the game was still there with him, and in the morning he woke to it, remembered pitching somewhere between daydream and nightdream; and until time for the game he felt like a shadow cast by the memory and the morning's light, a shadow that extended from his pillow to the locker room, when he took off the clothes which had not felt like his all day and put on the uniform which in his mind he had been wearing since he went to bed the night before. In high school, his classes interfered with those days of being a shadow. He felt that he was not so much going to classes as bumping into them on his way to the field. But in summer when he played American Legion ball, there was nothing to bump into, there was only the morning's wait which wasn't really waiting because waiting was watching time, watching it win usually, while on those mornings he joined time and flowed with it, so that sitting before the breakfast his mother cooked for him he felt he was in motion toward the mound.

And he had played a full season less one game of pro ball and still had not been able to convince his mind and body that the night before a game was far too early to enter the rhythm and concentration that would work for him when he actually had the ball in his hand. Perhaps his mind and body weren't the ones who needed convincing; perhaps he was right when he thought he was not imagining the games, but they were imagining him: benevolent and slow-witted angels who had followed him to take care of him, who couldn't understand they could rest now, lie quietly the night before, because they and Billy had all next day to spend with each other. If he had known Leslie was hurt he could have told her, as simply as a man saying he was beset by the swollen agony of mumps, that he could not make love on those nights, and it wasn't because he preferred thinking about tomorrow's game, but because those angels had followed him all the way to Lafayette, Louisiana. Perhaps he and Leslie could even have laughed about it, for finally it was funny, as funny as the story about Billy's Uncle Johnny whose two hounds had jumped the fence and faithfully tracked or followed him to a bedroom a few blocks from his house, and bayed outside the window: a bedroom Uncle Johnny wasn't supposed to be in, and more trouble than that, because to get there he had left a bedroom he wasn't supposed to leave.

Lafayette was funny too: a lowland of bayous and swamps and Cajuns. The Cajuns were good fans. They were so good that in early season Billy felt like he was barnstorming in some strange country, where everybody loved the Americans and decided to love baseball too since the Americans were playing it for them. They knew the game, but often when they yelled about it they yelled in French, and when they yelled in English it sounded like a Frenchman's English. This came from the colored section too. The stands did not extend far beyond third and first base, and where the first base stands ended there was a space of about fifty feet and, after that, shoved against each other, were two sections of folding wooden bleachers. The Negroes filled them, hardly noticed beyond the fifty feet of air and trampled earth. They were not too far down the right field line: sometimes when Billy ran out a ground ball he ended his sprint close enough to the bleachers to hear the Negroes calling to him in French, or in the English that sounded like French.

Two Cajuns played for the Bulls. The full name was the Lafayette Brahma Bulls, and when the fans said all of



it, they said Bremabulls. The owner was a rancher who raised these bulls, and one of his prizes was a huge and dangerous-looking hump-necked bull whose grey coat was nearly white; it was named Huey for their governor who was shot and killed in the state capitol building. Huey was led to home plate for opening day ceremonies, and after that he attended every game in a pen in foul territory against the right field fence. During batting practice the left handers tried to pull the ball into the pen. Nobody hit him, but when the owner heard about it he had the bull brought to the park when batting practice was over. By then the stands were filling. Huey was brought in a truck that entered through a gate behind the colored bleachers, and the Negroes would turn and look behind them at the bull going by. The two men in the truck wore straw cowboy hats. So did the owner, Charlie Breaux. When the Cajuns said his first and last names together they weren't his name anymore. And since it was the Cajun third baseman, E.J. Primeaux, a wiry thirty year old who owned a small grocery store which his wife ran during the season, who first introduced Billy to the owner, Billy had believed for the first few days after reporting to the club that he pitched for a man named Mr. Chollibro.

One night someone did hit Huey: during a game, with two outs, a high fly ball that Hap Thomas could have reached for and caught; he was there in plenty of time, glancing down at the pen's fence as he moved with the flight of the ball, was waiting safe from collision beside the pen, looking now from the ball to Huey who stood just on the other side of the fence, watching him; Hap stuck his arm out over the fence and Huey's head; then he looked at Huey again and withdrew his arm and stepped back to watch the ball strike Huey's head with a sound the fans heard behind third base. The ball bounced up and out and Hap barehanded it as Huey trotted once around the pen. Hap ran toward the dugout, holding the ball up, until he reached the first base umpire who was alternately signalling safe and pointing Hap back to right field. Then Hap flipped him the ball and, grinning, raised both arms to the fans behind the first base line, kept them raised to the Negroes as he ran past their bleachers and back to Huey's pen, taking off his cap as he approached the fence where Huey stood again watching, waved his cap once over the fence and horns, then trotted to his position, thumped his glove twice, then lowered it to his knee, and his bare hand to the other, and crouched. The fans were still laughing and cheering and calling to Hap and Huey and Chollibro when two pitches later the batter popped up to Caldwell at short.

In the dugout Primeaux said: "Hap, I seen many a outfielder miss a fly ball because he's wall-shy, but that's the first time I ever seen one miss because he's *bull*-horn shy." And Hap said: "In this league? That's nothing. No doubt about it, one of these nights I'll go out to right field and get bit by a cottonmouth so big he'll chop my leg in two." "Or get hit by lightning," Shep Caldwell said. In June lightning had struck a centerfielder for the Abbeville Athletics; struck the metal peak of his cap and exited into the earth through his spikes. When the Bulls heard the announcement over their public address system, their own sky was cloudy and there were distant flashes; perhaps they had even seen the flash that killed Tommy Lyons thirty miles away. The announcement came between innings when the Bulls were coming to bat; the players and fans stood for a minute of silent prayer. Billy was sitting beside Hap. Hap went to the cooler and came back with a paper cup and sat looking at it but not drinking, then said: "He broke a leg, Lyons did. I played in the Pacific Coast League with him one year. 'Forty-one. He was hitting three-thirty; thirty-something home runs; stole about forty bases. Late in the season he broke his leg sliding. He never got his hitting back. Nobody knew why. Tommy didn't know why. He went to spring training with the Yankees then back to the Pacific Coast League, and he kept going down. I was drafted by then, and next time I saw him was two years ago when he came to Abbeville. We had a beer one night and I told him he was headed for the major leagues when he broke his leg. No doubt about it. He said he knew that. And he still didn't understand it. Lost something: swing; timing. Jesus, he used to hit the ball. Now they fried him in front of a bunch of assholes in Abbeville. How's that for shit." For the rest of the game most of the players watched their sky; those who didn't were refusing to. They would not know until next day about the metal peak on Lyon's cap; but two innings after the announcement, Lucky went into the locker room and cut his off. When he came back to the dugout holding the blue cap and looking at the hole where the peak had been, Shep said: "Hell, Lucky, it never strikes twice." Lucky said: "That's because it don't have to," and sat down, stroking the hole.

Lafayette was only a town on the way to Detroit, to the Tigers; unless he got drafted, which he refused to think about, and thought about daily when he read of the war. Already the Tiger scout had watched Billy pitch three games and talked to him after each one, told him all he needed was time, seasoning; told him to stay in shape in the off-season; told him next year he would go to Flint, Michigan, to Class A ball. He was the only one on the club who had a chance for the major leagues, though Billy Joe Baron would probably go up, but not very far; he was a

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good first baseman and very fast, led the league in stolen bases, but he had to struggle and beat out drag bunts and ground balls to keep his average in the two-nineties and low three hundreds, and he would not go higher than Class A unless they outlawed the curve ball. The others would stay with the Bulls, or a team like the Bulls. And now Leslie was staying in this little town that she wasn't supposed to see as a town to live in longer than a season, and staying too in the little furnished house they were renting, with its rusted screen doors and its yard that ended in the back at a woods which farther on became a swamp, so that Billy never went off the back porch at night and if he peered through the dark at the grass long enough he was sure he saw cottonmouths.

She came into the kitchen that morning of the final game, late morning after a late breakfast so he would eat only twice before pitching, when he was already — or still, from the night before — concentrating on his twentieth win; and the pennant too. He want that: wanted to be the pitcher who had come to a third place club and after one season had ridden away from a pennant winner. She came into the kitchen and looked at him more seriously than he'd ever seen her, and said: "Billy, it's a terrible day to tell you this but you said today was the day I should pack."

He looked at her from his long distance then focused in closer, forced himself to hear what she was saying, felt like he was even forcing himself to see her in three dimensions instead of two, and said: "What's the matter, baby?"

"I'm not going."

"Not going where?"

"San Antonio. Flint. I'm staying here."

Her perspiring face looked so afraid and sorry for him and determined all at once, that he knew he was finished, that he didn't even know what was happening but there would never be enough words he could say. Her eyes were brimming with tears, and he knew they were for herself, for having come to this moment in the kitchen, so far from everything she could have known and predicted; deep in her eyes, as visible as stars, was the hard light of something else, and he knew that she had hated him too, and he imagined her hating him for days while he was on the road: saw her standing in this kitchen and staring out the screen door at the lawn and woods, hating him. Then the picture completed itself: a man, his back to Billy, stood beside her and put his arm around her waist.

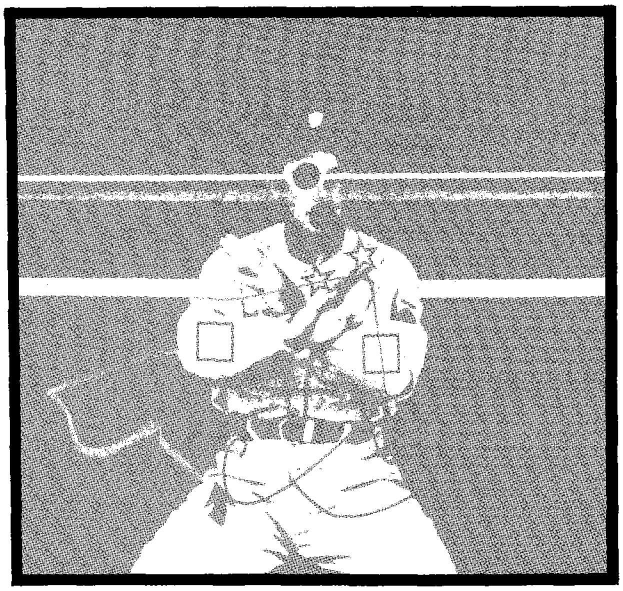
"Leslie?" and he had to clear his throat, clear his voice of the fear in it: "Baby, have you been playing around?"

She looked at him for such a long time that he was both afraid of what she would say, and afraid she wouldn't speak at all.

"I'm in love, Billy."

Then she turned and went to the back door, hugging her breasts and staring through the screen. He gripped the corners of the table, pushed his chair back, started to rise, but did not; there was nothing to stand for. He rubbed his eyes, then briskly shook his head.

"It wasn't just that you were on the road so much. I was ready for that. I used to tell myself it'd be exciting a lot of the time, especially in the big leagues. And I'd tell myself in ten years it'd be over anyway, some women have to—"



"*Ten?*" Thinking of the running he did, in the outfield on the days he wasn't pitching, and every day at home between seasons, having known long ago that his arm was a gift and it would last until one spring when it couldn't do the work anymore, would become for the first time since it started throwing a baseball just an ordinary arm; and what he could and must do was keep his lungs and legs strong so they wouldn't give out before it did. He surprised himself: he had not known that, while his wife was leaving him, he could proudly and defensively think of pitching in his early thirties. He had a glimpse of the way she saw him, and he was frightened and ashamed.

"All right: fifteen," she said. "Some women are married to sailors and soldiers and it's longer. It wasn't the road trips. It was when you were home: you weren't here. You weren't here, with me."

"I was here all day. Six, seven hours at the park at night. I don't know what that means."

"It means I'm not what you want."

"How can you tell me what I want?"

"You want to be better than Walter Johnson."

From his angle he saw very little of her face. He waited. But this time she didn't speak.

"Leslie, can't a man try to be the best at what he's got to do and still love his wife?" Then he stood: "Goddamnit, who *is* he?"

"George Lemoine," she said through the screen.

"George L*emoine*. Who's George L*emoine*?

"The dentist I went to."

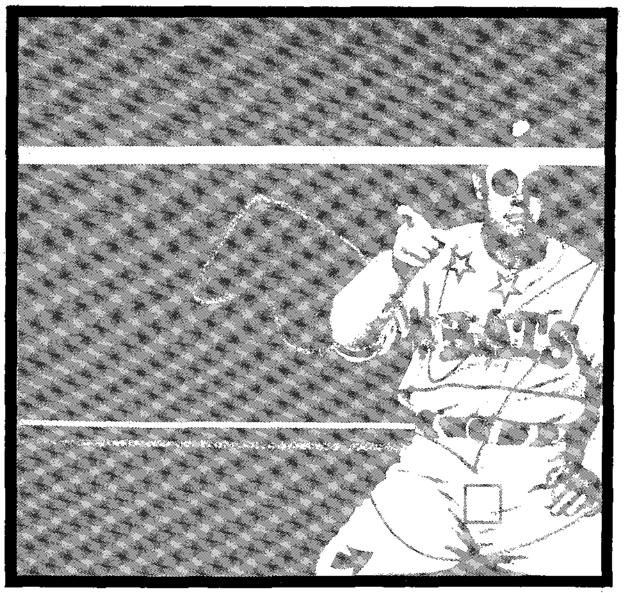
"What dentist you went to?"

She turned and looked at his face and down the length of his arms to his fists, then sat at the opposite end of the table.

"When I lost the filling. In June."

"*June?*"

"We didn't start then." Her face was slightly lowered, but her eyes were raised to his, and there was another light in them: she was ashamed but not remorseful, and her voice had the unmistakeable tone of a woman in love; they were never so serious as this, never so threatening,



and he was assaulted by images of Leslie making love with another man. "He went to the games alone. Sometimes we talked down at the concession stand. We—" Now she looked down, hid her eyes from him, and he felt shut out forever from the mysteries of her heart.

All his life he had been confident. In his teens his confidence and hope were concrete: the baseball season at hand, the season ahead, professional ball, the major leagues. But even as a child he had been confident and hopeful, in an abstract way. He had barely suffered at all, and he had survived that without becoming either callous or naive. He was not without compassion when his life involved him with the homely, the clumsy, the losers. He simply considered himself lucky. Now his body felt like someone else's, weak and trembling. His urge was to lie down.

"And all those times on the road I never went near a whorehouse."

"It's not the same."

He was looking at the beige wall over the sink, but he felt that her eyes were lowered still. He was about to ask what she meant, but then he knew.

"So I guess when I go out to the mound tonight he'll be moving in, is that right?"

Now he looked at her, and when she lifted her face, it had changed: she was only vulnerable.

"He has to get a divorce first. He has a wife and two kids."

"Wait a minute. *Wait* a minute. He's got a wife and two *kids*? How *old* is this son of a bitch?"

"Thirty-four."

"God*damn*it, Leslie! How dumb can you be? He's getting what he wants from you, what makes you think he won't be smart enough to leave it at that? God*damn*."

"I believe him."

"You believe him. A dentist anyhow. How can you be married to a ballplayer and fall for a dentist anyhow? And what'll you do for money? You got that one figured out?"

"I don't need much. I'll get a job."

"Well you won't have much either, because I'm going over there and kill him."

"Billy." She stood, her face as admonitory as his mother's. "He's got enough troubles. All summer I've been in trouble too. I've been sad and lonesome. That's the only way this could ever happen. You know that. All summer I've been feeling like I was running alongside the players' bus waving at you. Then he came along."

"And picked you up."

He glared at her until she blushed and lowered her eyes. Then he went to the bedroom to pack. But she had already done it: the suitcase and overnight bag stood at the foot of the bed. He picked them up and walked fast to the front door. Before he reached it she came out of the kitchen, and he stopped.

"Billy. I don't want you to be hurt; and I know you won't be for long. I hope someday you can forgive me. Maybe write and tell me how you're doing."

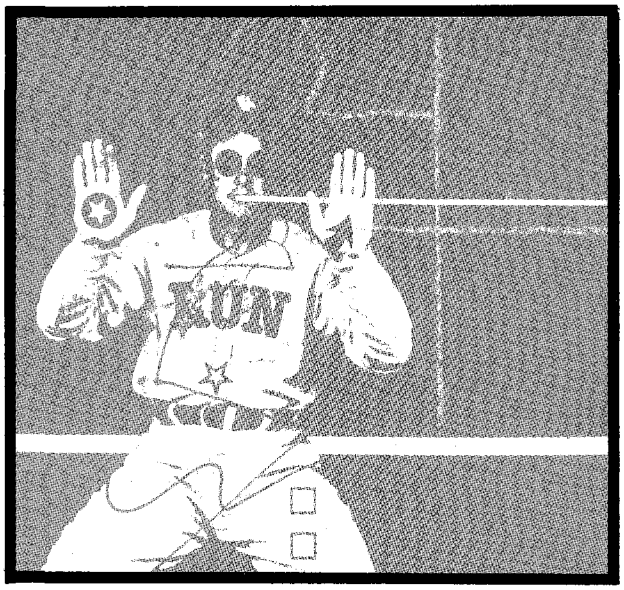
His urge to drop the suitcase and overnight bag and hold her and ask her to change her mind was so great that he could only fight it with anger; and with the clarity of anger he saw a truth which got him out the door.

"You want it all, don't you? Well, forget it. You just settle for what you chose."

Scornfully he scanned the walls of the living room, then Leslie from feet to head; then he left, out into the sun and the hot still air, and drove into town and registered at a hotel. The old desk clerk recognized him and looked puzzled but quickly hid it and said: "Y'all going to beat them New Iberia boys tonight?"

"Damn right."

The natural thing to do now was go to Lemoine's office, walk in while he was looking in somebody's mouth: *It's me you son of a bitch* and work him over with the left hand, cancel his afternoon for him, send him off to another dentist. What he had to do was unnatural. And as he climbed the stairs to his room he thought there was much about his profession that was unnatural. In the room he turned off the air conditioning and opened the windows, because he didn't want his arm to be in the cool air, then lay on the bed and closed his eyes and began pitching to the batting order. He knew them all perfectly; but he did not trust that sort of perfection, for it was too much like confidence, which was too much like complacency. So he started with Vidrine, the lead-off man. Left-handed. Went with the pitch, hit to all fields; good drag-bunter but only fair speed and Primeaux would be crowding him at third; choke-hitter, usually got a piece of the ball, but not that quick with the bat either; couldn't hit good speed. Fastballs low and tight. Change on him. Good base runner but he had to get a jump. Just hold him close to the bag. Then Billy stopped thinking about Vidrine on base. Thing was to concentrate now on seeing his stance and the high-cocked bat and the inside of the plate and Lucky's glove. He pushed aside the image of Vidrine crouching in a lead off first, and at the same time he pushed from his mind Leslie in the kitchen telling him; he saw Vidrine at the plate and, beyond him, he saw Leslie going away. She had been sitting in the box seat but now she walked alone down the ramp. Poor little Texas girl. She even sounded like a small town in Texas: Leslie Wells. Then she was gone.



The home run came with one out and nobody on in the top of the third inning after he had retired the first seven batters. Rick Stanley hit it, the eighth man in the order, a good field no hit third baseman in his mid-twenties. He had been in the minors for seven years and looked like it: though trimly built, and the best third baseman Billy had ever seen, he had a look about him of age, of resignation, of having been forced—when he was too young to bear it well—to compromise what he wanted with what he could do. At the plate he looked afraid, and early in the season Billy thought Stanley had been beaned and wasn't able to forget it. Later he realized it wasn't fear of beaning, not fear at all, but the strain of living so long with what he knew. It showed in the field too. Not during a play, but when it was over and Stanley threw the ball to the pitcher and returned to his position, his face looking as though it were adjusting itself to the truth he had forgotten when he backhanded the ball over the bag and turned and set and threw his mitt-popping peg to first; his face then was intense, reflexive as his legs and hands and arm; then the play was over and his face settled again into the resignation that was still new enough to be terrible. It spread downward to his shoulders and then to the rest of him and he looked old again. Billy wished he had seen Stanley play third when he was younger and still believed there was a patch of dirt and a bag and a foul line waiting for him in the major leagues.

One of Billy's rules was never to let up on the bottom of the batting order, because when one of them got a hit it hurt more. The pitch to Stanley was a good one. Like many players, Stanley was a poor hitter because he could not consistently be a good hitter; he was only a good hitter for one swing out of every twelve or so; the other swings had changed his life for him. The occasional good one gave the fans, and Stanley too by now, a surprise that always remained a surprise and so never engendered hope. His home run was a matter of numbers and time, for on this one pitch his concentration and timing and swing all flowed together, making him for that instant the hitter of his destroyed dream. It would happen again, in other ball parks, in other seasons; and if Stanley had been able to cause it instead of having it happen to him, he would be in the major leagues.

Billy's first pitch to him was a fast ball, waist high, inside corner. Stanley took it for a strike, with that look on his face. Lucky called for the same pitch. Billy nodded and played with the rosin bag to keep Stanley waiting longer; then Stanley stepped out of the box and scooped up dust and rubbed it on his hands and the bat handle; when he moved to the plate again he looked just as tense and Billy threw the fast ball; Stanley swung late and under it. Lucky called for the curve, the pitch that was sweet tonight, and Billy went right into the windup, figuring Stanley was tied up tightly now, best time to throw a pitch into all that: he watched the ball go in fast and groin-high, then fall to the left and it would have cut the outside corner of the plate just above Stanley's knees; but it was gone. Stanley not only hit it so solidly that Billy knew it was gone before looking, but he got around on it, pulled it, and when Billy found it in the left-centerfield sky it was still climbing above James running from left and LeBlanc from center. At the top of its arc, there was something final about its floodlit surface against the real sky, dark up there above the lighted one they played under.

He turned his back to the plate. He never watched a home run hitter cross it. He looked out at LeBlanc in center; then he looked at Harry Burke at second, old Harry, the manager, forty-one years old and he could still cover the ground, mostly through cunning; make the pivot—how many double plays had he turned in his life? —and when somebody took him out with a slide Billy waited for the cracking sound, not just of bone but the whole body, like a dried tree limb. Hap told him not to worry, old Harry was made of oiled leather. His face looked as if it had already outlived two bodies like the one it commanded now. Never higher than Triple A, and that was long ago; when the Bulls hired him and then the fans loved him he moved his family to Lafayette and made it his home, and between seasons worked for an insurance company, easy money for him, because he went to see men and they drank coffee and talked baseball. He had the gentlest eyes Billy had ever seen on a man. Now Harry trotted over to him.

"We got twenty-one outs to get that back for you."

"The little bastard hit that pitch."

"Somebody did. Did you get a close look at him?"

Billy shook his head and went to the rubber. He walked the fat pitcher Talieferro on four pitches and Vidrine on six, and Lucky came to the mound. They called him Lucky because he wasn't.

"One run's one thing," Lucky said. "Let's don't make it three."

"The way y'all are swinging tonight, one's as good as nine." For the first time since he stepped onto the field, Leslie that morning rose up from wherever he had locked her, and struck him.

"Hey," Lucky said. "Hey, it's early."

"Can't y'all hit that fat son of a bitch?"

"We'll hit him. Now you going to pitch or cry?"

He threw Jackson a curve ball and got a double play around the horn, Primeaux to Harry to Baron, who did a split stretching and got Jackson by a half stride.

He went to his end of the bench and watched Talieferro, who for some reason pronounced his name Tolliver: a young big lefthanded pitcher with the kind of belly that belonged to a much older man, in bars on week-end afternoons; he had pitched four years at the local college, this was his first season of pro ball, he was sixteen and nine and usually lost only when his control was off. He did not want to be a professional ballplayer. He had a job with an oil company at the end of the season, and was only pitching and eating his way through a Louisiana summer. Billy watched Lucky adjust his peakless cap and dust his hands and step to the plate, and he pushed Leslie back down, for she was about to burst out of him and explode in his face. He looked down at the toe plate on his right shoe, and began working the next inning, the middle of the order, starting with their big hitter, the centerfielder Remy Gauthreaux, who was finished too, thirty years old, but smart and dangerous and he'd knock a mistake out of the park. Low and away to Gauthreaux. Lucky popped out to Stanley in foul territory and came back to the dugout shaking his head.

Billy could sense it in all the hitters in the dugout, and see it when they went to the plate: Talieferro was on, and they were off. It could be anything: the pennant game, when every move counted; the last game of the season, so the will to be a ballplayer was losing to that other part of them which insisted that when they woke tomorrow nothing they felt tonight would be true; they would drive home to the jobs and other lives that waited for them; most would go to places where people had not even heard of the team, the league. All of that would apply to the Pelicans too; it could be that none of it applied to Talieferro: that rarely feeling much of anything except digestion, hunger, and gorging, he had no conflict between what he felt now and would start feeling tomorrow. And it could be that he simply had his best stuff tonight, that he was throwing nearly every pitch the way Stanley had swung that one time.

Billy went to the on-deck circle and kneeled and watched Harry at the plate, then looked out at Simmons, their big first baseman: followed Gauthreaux in the order, a power hitter but struck out about a hundred times a year: keep him off balance, in and out, and throw the fast one right into his power, and right past him too. Harry, choking high on the bat, fouled off everything close to the plate then grounded out to short, and Billy handed his jacket to the batboy and went through cheers to the plate. When he stepped in Talieferro didn't look at him, so Billy stepped out and stared until he did, then dug in and cocked the bat, a good hitter so he had played right field in high school and American Legion when he wasn't pitching. He watched the slow easy fatman's wind-up and the fast ball coming out of it: swung for the fence and popped it to second, sprinting down the line and crossing the bag before the ball came down. When he turned he saw Talieferro already walking in, almost at the third base line. Harry brought Billy's glove out to the mound and patted his rump.

"I thought you were running all the way to Flint."

In the next three innings he pitched to nine men. He ended the fifth by striking out Stanley on curve balls; and when Talieferro led off the sixth Billy threw a fast ball at his belly that made him spin away and fall into the dust. Between innings he forced himself to believe in the hope of numbers: the zeroes and the one on the scoreboard in right-center, the inning number, the outs remaining for the Bulls; watched them starting to hit, but only one an inning, and nobody as far as second base. He sat sweating under his jacket and in his mind pitched to the next three Pelicans, then the next three just to be sure, although he didn't believe he would face six of them next inning, or any inning, and he thought of eighteen then fifteen then twelve outs to get the one run, the only one he needed, because if it came to that, Talieferro would tire first. When Primeaux struck out leading off the sixth, Billy looked at Hap at the other end of the bench, and he wanted to be down there with him. He leaned forward and stared at his shoes. Then the inning was over and he gave in to the truth he had known anyway since that white vision of loss just before the ball fell.

Gauthreaux started the seventh with a single to right, doing what he almost never did: laid off pulling and went with the outside pitch. Billy worked Simmons low and got the double play he needed, then he struck out the catcher Lantrip, and trotted off the field with his string still going, thirteen batters since the one-out walk to Vidrine in the third. He got the next six. Three of them grounded out, and the other three struck out on the curve, Billy watching it break under the shiny blur of the bat as it would in Flint and wherever after that and Detroit too: his leg kicking and body wheeling and arm whipping around in rhythm again with his history which had begun with a baseball and a friend to throw it to, and had excluded all else, or nearly all else, and had included the rest somewhere alongside him, almost out of his vision (once between innings he allowed himself to think about Leslie, just long enough to forgive her); his history was his future too and the two of them together were twenty-five years at most until the time when the pitches that created him would lose their speed, hang at the plate, become hits in other men's lives instead of the heart of his; they would discard him then, the pitches would. But he loved them for that too, and right now they made his breath singular out of the entire world, so singular that there was no other world: the war would not call him because it couldn't know his name; and he would refuse the grief that lurked behind him. He watched the final curve going inside then breaking down and over and Lucky's mitt popped and the umpire twisted and roared and pointed his right fist to the sky.

He ran to the dugout, tipping his cap to the yelling Cajuns, and sat between Hap and Lucky until Baron flied out to end the game. After the showers and goodbyes he drove to the hotel and got his still-packed bags and paid the night clerk and started home, out of the lush flatland of marsh and trees, toward Texas. Her space on the front seat was filled as with voice and touch. He turned on the radio. He was not sleepy, and he was driving straight through to San Antonio. □

PAUL HUNTER

SOME HILLBILLY MACHIAVELLI

I have a brother a tad bit younger
an alter ego you might say
a brother who drives a Harley
and lashes out at injustice
snipes at indifference
and can say
adios motherfucker
to someone like you
who pretend to be my friend
but refuse all invitations
you who grin and go
on about your business
as if friendship were an alley
gradually built up to the point
it might as well be a chimney
for all it saw the light of day

This brother this
alter ego would
set you straight
in his blunt way:
he would say
lets us take a walk down
this little deadend
and have us a looksee

Arm in arm
you would begin to agree with him
he would josh and threaten
you with nose jobs
reciting a thinly veiled story
through his full set of teeth
of someone who forgot to pay
a debt of honor
and suddenly found himself
down in some cabbage patch
rolling in the money

There would be no missing the point
there would be no way around him
knee deep in ashes
you might look up
the long black flue
and smell the smoke of old fires
and start to think you saw stars

K. Dyble Thompson

THE NAIF

T Coraghessan Boyle

I woke with an earache and wondered if it was meningitis. There was a girl asleep beside me. She was wearing a pair of jockey shorts and an army shirt, and her legs were dirty with fine black hair. The room, I realized, was unfamiliar. For a long moment I lay watching the breath elevate and depress the girl's chest, until suddenly a name began jabbing at the periphery of my memory—the name of the girl most likely, the name of a state as well. Nebraska? Connecticut? Virginia? It wasn't so much the ear as the head above it. When I moved the pain was quick and sharp and my skull felt pumped full of water.

Outside the record cold continued. Seventeen below, high winds. I sat up, head throbbing, and found a sweater rolled up in the blanket. It looked vaguely familiar. I pinched it over my ears and stretched it down over my shoulders and chest. It fit like a body stocking. After a moment's confusion I realized that it was a woman's sweater. I stood in the tight sweater and peered out the window with the idea of locating myself. As I rose from the bed the girl (Virginia) shouted "What!" and then drifted back off to sleep. I cracked the bamboo curtain. There was ice on the window. A wino lay on the sidewalk in a litter of white port bottles, his arm frozen to a fire hydrant. My ears began to ring.

Out on the street the arctic air seared my nostrils. I huddled in my denim jacket and the sweater rode up in back, exposing bare vertebrae and upper buttocks to the cold slice of the wind. I was looking for coffee and bagels. There was yellow ice on the stoop, papers scuttled along the pavement, the sky was like an unwashed pot. I started up the street and then stopped cold: the wino was still there, his arm still grafted to the hydrant. I decided to do something. "Hey!" I shouted. "Hey Buddy!" There was no response. I kicked through the bottles and bent over him. He was inert: a manikin, an ice sculpture. I tapped at his cold whiskered cheeks, tugged at his arm, shouted, pried off his WWI flying ace hat and slapped his head with it. His beard was white with frozen breath. I listened for a heartbeat through the layers of clothes, my ear flat against his chest, the potent freeze-dried wino stench a jolt to my nostrils. I heard nothing but the wind. And then suddenly his body was convulsing, heaving for breath: his head jerked back and he sneezed in my hair. I leapt up and began shaking him. His eyelids fluttered, then closed again. There were jewels of ice on his lashes. I thought of

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the mummified corpses *National Geographic* finds in the high Andes and tried to wedge his arm from the hydrant with the heel of my boot. No use. My fingertips were burning pins and needles, the small of my back was permafrost to the bone, the war of the worlds howled in my aching inner ear.

A moment later I was back in Virginia's kitchenette filling a plastic wastebasket with hot water. She was still asleep in the other room, snoring like an electric appliance. I started down the stairwell. Water sloshed on the floor, on the stairs, in my shoes, on the stoop. Outside the bucket steamed like witches' brew. I inverted it over the wino's sleeve. His coat darkened, there was a crisp clean crackle, as of wood splitting or too much weight on a frozen pond—and then the arm broke free and slapped down on the pavement. I dropped the bucket and took hold of his wrists. Then, my head pounding, I dragged him across the sidewalk, into the building and step-by-step up the dark stairwell to Virginia's apartment. Inside I propped him up against the space heater, scribbled out a note for Virginia, and pinned it to his lapel.

Dear Virginia:

This is a wino. Sorry straits.
Dragged him in to thaw out.

—Olaf

When I got back there was a peculiar burnt-rubber/sweatsock odor in the air, the essence of defrosted bum. I heard voices. Virginia and the wino were sitting at the table in the kitchenette, drinking coffee and vodka. Virginia was laughing.

"Hey!" I called, "Virginia. I'm back with breakfast."

"Hello honey," she said, something in her voice reminding me of Lyndon Johnson. "This is Em'ly." She rolled her fingers at the wino.

"Emily?"

"Yeah," he said, his bloodshot wino's eyes glazing 100 proof Smirnoff, "Tresro Joe and the boys on Houston Street give me the name cause I used to be a poet. Short for Emily Dickinson."

I took the coffee out of the bag. It was frozen to the cardboard containers.

"Here, have some of this, honey." Virginia poured me a cup of slow-dripped Maxwell House. I took a sip. She was looking at me out of her close green smuggler's eyes. "What is this Virginia shit, anyway?" she said.

"You're not Virginia?"

She laughed. "Texas, honey, is the name. Don't you remember? The two of us drinkin Bull's Pizzles last night in honor of the Lone Star State? Beef consommé and vodka with a touch of tabasco and a spot of cream?" She leaned toward the wino and nudged his elbow. "You can guess what the cream represents in the scheme of things, huh honey?"

The wino slapped his knee, laughed, leered and gagged. Then he looked up at me. "I appreciate what you done for me out there, Olaf. I mean nobody gives much of a shit whether us winos freeze to death or not." He grabbed my hand and gave it a freak-power handshake. "Thanks."

I smiled. The kitchen smelled like a slow-burning zoo.

Texas and I got into the vodka with Emily. First we mixed it with our coffee, then we started to pass the bottle. Gusts rattled the windows. It was down to twenty-five below. Water mains bursting, cars abandoned, sparrows freezing to tree branches in the park. Emily passed me the bottle. He was telling wino anecdotes, his voice thick with phlegm and his eyes like spots of blood. "We're over in the East Village, me and Tresro Joe, standing on the corner passing a pint of wine when this bald guy with wire rim glasses comes up to us and says 'You want to make ten bucks a day?' Joe is aghast. 'You mean work?' he says. 'No work at all,' says the bald guy. 'It's an experiment at the Lodar Clinic. We put you up, feed you and give you sixteen ounces of pure grain alcohol a day.' We're stunned. Can't believe our ears. 'Hallelujah lord it's the second coming,' says I. 'You're on, brother,' says Tresro and off we go to the good doctor's clinic. Four ounces of hootch—200 proof mind you—every six hours, the first bed I'd been in in ten years and nothing to do but stay whizzed all day long."

Emily paused to take a sip from the bottle. He grinned at me. "Hey Olaf, you got a butt?" I handed him a cigarette and lit it for him. His grin got wider. "I like your sweater, did I tell you that?" he said. Texas giggled. Emily squinted through the smoke, took a deep drag and went on. "But there was a catch of course. Liver biopsy twice a day. They take this needle looks like a goddam stiletto and they jab it right into your gut—down through that lovely soft belly hair and those rolls of tender white suet, through nets of vein and artery, the dark mush of your body cavity—and zap! they stick your liver like something on a plate. When the needle comes out there's a piece of your liver on the end of it for the good doctor to squint at through his microscope and tell you how fucked up you are. 'Shit,' says I, 'I'm getting out of here.' 'Bet your ass,' says Joe, "—no dome-top medico going to destroy my liver.' "

Suddenly we were laughing, all three of us, laughing and gasping and pounding the table like lodge brothers at a convention. It was almost symphonic: Emily's bursts of heh-heh heh-heh like the sawing of violins, Texas' full round barrel-laugh deep as contra-bassoon and double bass, my nasal snicker like the piping of woodwinds. I laughed until I drooled on the table. Texas slapped my back. Emily's face went from red to bruised plum and he began to cough. He cleared his throat and spat on the floor. "Wo-ooo-hee," he said, and the laughing fired up again. The vodka was gone and we were passing a pint of lemon-flavored gin Emily had found in one of the kitchen cabinets. "But that's nothing," Emily said. "You ought to hear some of Jeep's or Tresro's experiences—or talk to Digger and Dog, the guys that work the meridian at Second and Houston wiping windshields when cars stop for the light. They all got a story to tell." Emily shook his head. "Poor fuckers, out there in this weather. Probably never see half of them again."

Texas put the bottle down and wiped her mouth. She was staring at Emily's puckered wino face with a missionary intensity. "Hey!" she shouted. "Let's go round 'em all up and let 'em crash here till the freeze-out lets up! I mean they're human beings, right?"

Emily nodded.

"We can't just let them die out there."

Two hours later Texas' apartment was wall-to-wall wino. They were sprawled against the baseboard like a series of rummage sales, muttering to themselves, picking ears and noses, finishing off the last of the almond extract and floor wax. One was lying face-down in a puddle of vomit, another was shredding newspaper to make a nest for himself in a corner. The place smelled like a beached garbage scow.

Emily was sitting on the back of an overturned chair, Texas and an emaciated wino on the floor beside him. They were passing a bottle of Vitalis. "Hey Olaf," Emily said. "Come on over and join us, brother."

"All right," I said. I was having trouble keeping my head up. I got to my feet and the blood dropped in a ball from my brain to my knees. I felt like a high-speed elevator.

Emily gestured toward the emaciated wino. "Like you to meet my man Tresro Joe. Joe, Olaf." The wino held up a hand like a bird's claw. I reached down and shook it. "Enchanté," he croaked.

I sat. Texas was wearing a red and yellow dashiki that hung from her like a three-man tent. She handed me the Vitalis. "Here honey, for your head." A wino stood shakily on the far side of the room and meandered toward us, hands groping like a sleepwalker. When he got within five feet of us he pitched forward and crashed to the floor, his head grazing my knee. The concussion flushed a spray of insects from his hair: I watched them burrow into the carpet. Then I took a pull on the bottle in my hand and realized I was drinking hair tonic.

It wasn't all that bad.

"You know something, Olaf honey? Not a single morsel of food has passed Tresro's lips in over two months." Texas sounded like a cocktail party hostess initiating conversation among guests.

"Two months?" I said. Beneath the strata of rag, newspaper and overcoat I could see that Joe was a man of sticks. He sat there, inanimate, looking as if he should be hanging in a physician's closet. The only sign of life was his eyes: bulging, liquid and lidless, they were locked in a mad perpetual stare. I thought of fakirs, mystics, iguanas.

"Thass right," he whispered. "Nothing worth eating. Red dye number two. Monosodium glutamate. Nitrites. Steroids. You know Campbell makes his chicken noodle soup out of cancerous chicken goiters? Fact." He nodded his head. His face was bone and hair. Emily handed him the bottle. "Hamburger. Hah! Snout and anus. They grind it up with tallow and put it on a bun. Eat a clam you might just as well sop up jellied arsenic. Mercury. PCB. DDT. GMC. Give me a pint of white port anyday."

"Hear! Hear!" Emily shouted, and a few of the others took up the refrain until it degenerated into crazed muttering at the far end of the room. The noise roused the wino at my knee. He raised his head like a dying tortoise and then slapped it back down, as if the effort had exhausted him. No one noticed. Emily was quoting poetry to Texas. Tresro Joe was staring at me out of his lidless eyes. "Calcium propionate added to retard spoilage," he said. I was sitting cross-legged against the wall, my head aching. Suddenly the heap of feculent rags at my knee began to stir again. The rags trembled, rushed, and then heaved upward like some geological event—until finally the wino within them was lying on his back, blinking up at me. Two streams of mucus ran from his nostrils into his beard. His mouth gaped open. "Ab-ab-ab-ab," he said.

"Abba!" said Joe. "Where you been brother?"

"Give him a shot of that tonic, will you Olaf?" said Emily. I poured two shakes of the Vitalis into his mouth. "Ab-ab-ab-ab," he said.

"Sad case," said Emily.

"Hard core," said Joe. "See—the man can't talk no more. Too far gone to even bum a quarter. Just holds out his hand and says abba-abba."

Texas was moved. She crossed her thick calves under the dashiki and made sympathetic noises.

"Don't waste your pity on Abba," said Emily. "There's nothing you can do to help him—or any of us for that matter. Oh you can get us in here out of the north wind and give us something to rinse our mouths with, yeah. But the suffering—the suffering is personal, sweetheart. Like the poet says, 'The dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse/Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.' "

"Yeah, you can't do nothing for us," croaked Joe. "Every man got his own cross to bear. But you could ease the pain a bit by maybe going out to the package store for something to slide down the old esophagus, huh sport?"

This was addressed to me. I was profoundly drunk. There were twelve dollars in my pocket. It was Sunday. I had to get home.

"Okay," I said.

"Ab-ab-ab-ab," said Abba.

The temperature had dropped another five degrees. I walked around the block, found a delicatessen and bought two cases of Schaeffer. I was six cents short. The man behind the counter watched me fumble through my pockets. The sleeve of my jacket was torn, a two-day growth napped my chin and cheeks, I was still wearing Texas' lavender sweater and my breath stank of Vitalis. "Forget it," the man said.

The stairwell was choked with fresh winos when I got back. They were sprawled on the stairs, snuffling and stinking, trading limericks, puking, laughing their crazed wino laughs. At first I was afraid of stepping on them, but after the first few I blundered my way through, letting my feet fall where they might.

Joe cried "Vino!" as I stepped through the door and they swarmed me like Biafran refugees, their yellowed fingers clutching at my jacket, my pants, the big brown bag in my arms. Rags flapped and tatters whirled, black fingernails flailed the air and poptops cracked like machinegun fire. I lost my balance and fell. Beer foamed, hissed into the air, sifted down in a fine drizzle. There were curses and shouts. Winos from the stairwell surged in, their ragged boots and sneakers pounding over my wrist, my elbow, my shin. Thirty seconds later the two cases were gone. I realized that the situation had gotten out of hand.

I sat up. The winos sat down. Some of them sniffed at the empty cans, others began snoring as soon as they touched the carpet. Texas was lying against the wall in a heap of them, foam bearding her chin. I shook her. "Wha?" she said. I helped her to her feet and guided her into the back room. Three winos were asleep in the bed, another was curled up in the closet. "Listen Texas," I said, "—isn't this a bit much?"

"What you mean, honey?"

"I mean these winos are demolishing your apartment."

"My apartment?" She laughed. "My apartment is in Port Arthur Texas, honey."

It was meningitis: I was sure of it.

"I'm just watching this place for a friend of mine while he's on a road trip."

"Road trip?"

"Yeah, you know," she said, her eyes cloudy, "like they're playing Cleveland this weekend."

I sat down on one of the winos.

"His name's Ahmec Ras Imamu Rahsad, but I call him Roger for short. He said he'd be back—let's see . . ." She was ticking days off on her fingers, furrowing her brow. My bowels tightened. She looked up at me. "Sunday."

I'd made it as far as the outer room when the door boomed open. Roger stood in the doorway. Seven-foot-one, two-hundred and-ninety-three pounds. He was wearing a fur coat. There was a valise in his hand. The expression on his face would have stopped the Huns in mid-gallop.

He hit me twice. A glancing blow to the neck and a jackhammer hook to the ear. I went down, mercifully, in a litter of winos. Then he raged through the apartment, crumpling winos like paper bags, kicking, flailing, all the while chanting "motherfucker" as if it were a tribal lay. Then he emerged from the bedroom with a monstrous flathead broom like half a felled oak, and began sweeping us out the door. Beercans, shredded paper, winos, broken glass, me—the furious stiff black bristles dug into us, again and again, until we were out the door and foaming down the stairs. The whole thing, from the moment the door opened to the time we lay heaped like refuse in the street, took no more than five minutes.

The wind cut like razors and glass. Limp winos strewed the pavement like the aftermath of a battle. I lurched to my feet, shivering, and became aware of a faint tremor on the wind, the sad keen of human distress. I looked up at the window and the silhouettes of Roger and Texas, locked in a shadow ballet of descending fists, sweeping arms. Her voice was pitched high, punching through the gusts like an icepick. I started up the steps, felt a hand on my elbow. It was Emily. "What are you, a cub scout?" he said. "There's nothing you can do."

I turned and wandered off after Emily and Joe. The wind stung my face and hands like alcohol applied to a series of lacerations. I wanted only to be home, in bed, with a cup of hot tea. Suddenly I realized that I'd spent my last cent on the beer. I stopped and rifled through my pockets, front and back, like an escape artist wriggling out of a strait jacket. There were two pennies and a dime nestled in the lint of my back pocket. I was thirty-eight cents short of subway fare. Up ahead, Joe and Emily were rounding the corner. "Hey!" I shouted. "Hold up a minute!" I rushed up to them, my lungs stricken and heaving, out of breath, the cold biting into me like a thousand two-penny nails. "Emily, Joe," I gasped, "you got to give me thirty-eight cents." They were stunned. They drew together, as if for protection. "For the subway." The wind whipped their wino tatters. Joe began to laugh. "Look—it's seventy-three blocks uptown to my apartment."

"Hey, Olaf," Emily said, grinning. "We're bums, remember? What would we be doing with thirty-eight cents."

"But what am I going to do?"

"What are *we* going to do?" croaked Joe. "You should be looking out for us, brother. I mean you got your three rooms, your furry blue slippers and your thermostat—what do we got?"

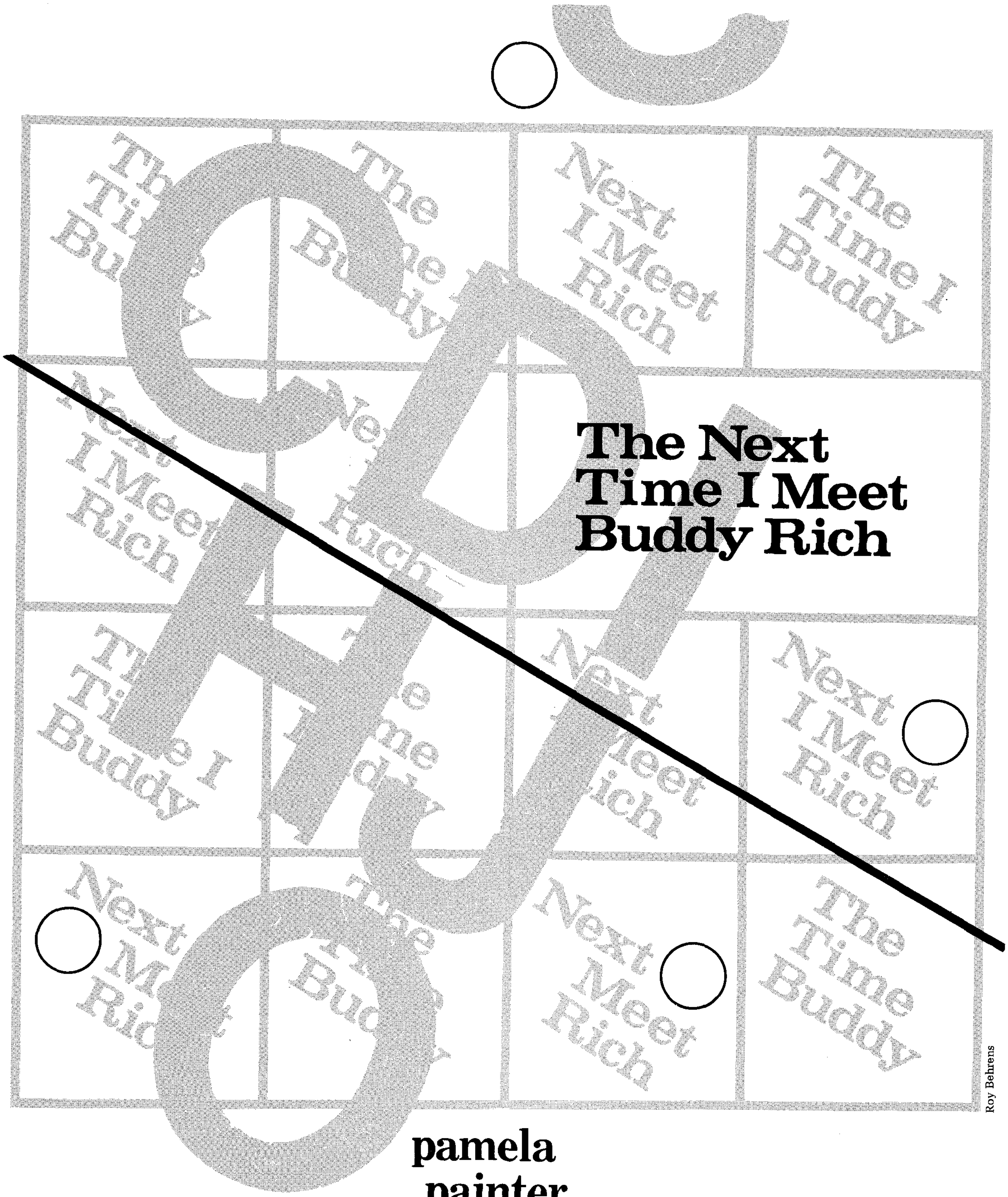
"Sorry Olaf," said Emily, and then they were gone.

I followed them for two blocks. They stopped at the kitchen door of a bar on Second Avenue, knocked three times, and stood back as the door swung open. A hand emerged, palm up. Emily unfolded a dollar bill and exchanged it for a brown paper bag. He held the bag to his mouth and tipped back his head. Joe reached for Emily's hand. The door slammed and the alley went dark.

I spent another hour on the street, my jacket stuffed with newspaper, trying to bum thirty-eight cents. A man in a camel hair coat stepped out of Phoebe's and I grabbed his sleeve. "Mister: can you spare a quarter for the subway? See I'm—" He snatched his arm away, cocked his shoulders and spat down the front of my jacket. Another customer told me to get a job. Finally the bartender pushed through the door, caught hold of my collar and pinned me up against the wall. "Beat it," he hissed.

I walked home. Seventy-three blocks. The next day my head was full of fluid. I had a temperature of 103°. I dialed twenty-seven doctors. Finally a Taiwanese pediatrician with a goatee showed up. He looked down my throat. "Meningitis," he said. Then he charged me forty-five dollars for a housecall and arranged for an ambulance to pick me up. As I crammed things into an overnight bag, weak and nauseous, the phone rang. It was Texas. Roger had thrown her out. It was too bad about my having to go to the hospital. Could she stay at my place for a few days? Until she got settled?

My eyes were blistering, my head weighed a ton and a half, there were firebrands buried in my neck. "Sure," I said. □


The Time I Buddy
The Time I Buddy
Next I Meet Rich
The Time I Buddy
Next I Meet Rich
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Next I Meet Rich
The Time Buddy

Roy Behrens

The Next Time I Meet Buddy Rich

pamela painter skeen

The Next Time

We pulled into town just as the sun was coming up, dropped some stuff off at the rooms they gave us and took the drums and other instruments over to the club. The debris of empty glasses, full ashtrays, disarranged chairs was still there from the night before. Heavy with stale air. I unrolled my rug, set up my drums. Felt for the piece of gum Buddy Rich once gave me—now stuck on the bottom of the floor tom-tom. Vince hooked up the sound system and then we headed back to the hotel.

I carried in my practice set, calling to Gretel to open the door. I finally used my key. Sounds of the shower running droned from the bathroom. Her clothes were scattered over a chair, suitcases sprawled open on the floor. Then the water went off and soon Gretel appeared in the doorway with a towel around her, a folded rim keeping it in place, flattening her breasts. Her hair was piled on her head and held by one barrette. Beads of moisture gleamed on her shoulders, her legs.

"No more hot water," she said. She pulled the barrette from her hair, shaking it loose. "I'm getting tired of these places. This is too far away from the club considering we're going to be here two weeks."

"We can move." We had before.

"It's the whole scene," she said shaking her head. "Where's it going? I *know* what you want. But sometimes wanting isn't enough."

I lay down on the bed and closed my eyes. I saw her standing in the towel. I took the towel away and looked at her full breasts, her stomach. A different texture of hair.

"Sorry." She said. "You want to listen now or later?"

"Later." I put the towel back and opened my eyes. She was looking out the window. I felt sorry for her living this way, but the words to change it all, to take me back to Erie just wouldn't come yet. "Let's have a nice dinner after the club run tonight. Chicago doesn't close down like Kansas." She shrugged her shoulders. She was right. If you weren't playing, it was hard to care what you did out here. One room after another. A hundred tables in a hundred towns. The bed slid as I got up. I licked some of the water off her right shoulder. She didn't move.

"O.K., later," she said. And I understood everything would have to wait. That was O.K. too. She had been traveling with me for the past year, ever since we decided we would eventually get married. We never mentioned settling down, but I could tell she was tired of being on the road. The band probably wouldn't be together much longer anyway with Jack pulling toward hard rock. And then I'd take my uncle up on his offer of being a plumber again for him. *That* I didn't want to think about.

So I arranged my practice set, fitting it around my chair. Settling it into the sparse pile of the rug to make it steady. "Bring me back two ham on rye," I told Gretel when Jack and Vince knocked on the door.

Vince understood. Five years I'd been breaking my ass to get the big break, trying to make it happen. One night in Columbus I had been talking to a drummer who was almost there, would in a few years—by thirty—have to be. That's what I asked him. "How do you get there?"

He wiped his hands under his arms and said, "You practice your ass off all your life and the better you get the worse you seem to yourself and you're ready to give up; and then one day when your hands aren't getting any faster you say the hell with it. When you next sit down at a set of drums after you haven't touched them like a vow you'd made—suddenly you're doing all the things you've been trying to do for years—suddenly there is a 'before' and 'after' and it's the 'after' where you are now—and god damn you don't know why, you just know that you're finally there. Then it's only a matter of time."

And now my time was running out. The band close to breaking up. Kids, pets, hard rock up against the slower stuff. I looked down at my hands. Clean now. The prints clean, sensitive to the smooth surface of the sticks. I always had hated being a plumber although I'd been good at it. All that grease, fitting pipes, welding. I straightened my back. Time enough for planning that later. Practice time now. I pulled the plastic curtains to let in the last of the hotel's sun. Then I started to play. Slow at first, just letting my wrists do the work, looking out past the sunken single beds, past the cheap print of some flower, using a little pressure, feeling how my wrists were somehow connected with the tension in my feet. Just feeling it happen like I was watching myself in the mirror. Trying for the sounds of Buddy Rich.

The next time I meet Buddy Rich it'll be at a 76 station in some crazy place, like Boone, Iowa, not at a concert, and he'll be all burnt out waiting for a cup of coffee and I'll go up to him and say—what I'll say I haven't worked out yet but it'll happen and I'll say it then.

I met Buddy Rich for the first time at Rainbow Gardens in Erie, Pennsylvania. I was playing a spot called The Embers and it was our night off. We went early, really early, to get good seats, up close so I could watch him play, watch his hands and feet and the way his body moves. He's a karate expert—once said that the martial arts apply to drumming; they key your mind up for getting into it, coordinate your hands and feet. I want to ask him about this when I meet him next.

The Rainbow Gardens was an oval-shaped arena, a stage at one end and a big wooden dance floor in the middle of a bunch of tables. Loads of people and glasses and cheap booze. It was during intermission, on my way back from the john that I saw him. He was sitting off to the side, just happened to be there—probably after changing his shirt. Not drinking, just leaning back in his chair. Looking out as if to say "O.K., show me something intelligent."

I walked past thinking 'that can't be.' Somehow you think of stars as either living on stage or in their dressing rooms. No real life, no tired hands. Then I walked past again and got enough nerve to say "Buddy Rich?" and he didn't say 'no' so I went on and said "I'm Tony—I'm a drummer and I play with Circuit of Sound." The words kind of rushed at him like a spilled drink and just as effective. "I think your band is really great," I said. He seemed to lean farther back in his chair. He had on a

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PAMELA PAINTER SKEEN is a co-editor of Story Quarterly.

long-sleeved grey shirt and grey pants. His fingers were tapping on the table, tapping like they were just doing it by themselves. I was fumbling with my wallet for a card that had the name of my band on it. "Would you autograph this for me?" I said. I gave him a pen.

His first words were "Who do you want it to?"

"Tony," I said, "and good luck on the drums."

He looked at me kind of funny and then wrote, 'Best Wishes.' I nodded, disappointed. Then I thanked him and went back to my seat, knowing I had blown my chance. Where are the questions when it matters? I wished I could grab him by the collar and say "Hey, I'm different. I'm not like all the rest of the people who don't understand what Buddy Rich is unless you're in solo. Who don't understand that you, Buddy Rich, are here for the band—while all these people are here for Buddy Rich. Hey man, I understand." But I didn't say it. I drank down eight ounces of Schlitz—chugging it to drown my embarrassment, and dying a second time because I finally realized that he thought I meant Good luck to him on the drums. As if he needed it. Shit.

I let about ten minutes pass. Watching him just sitting there, wanting to know what was going through his mind, wanting to know what was keeping his hands moving or still. What's in his mind when he's playing? He had had a back operation in July and a night later he was on the bandstand, behind the drums. Later, on a talk show he'd said they should have done the operation while he was playing, then they wouldn't have needed an anesthetic.

Finally, I couldn't stand it anymore. I chugged another Schlitz and stood up. I hadn't talked to my date since I sat down and all I could do now was tap her under the chin—grateful that she understood. I left.

"I talked to you a few minutes ago and nothing came out right—including asking for your autograph," I said. He seemed to appreciate my honesty because his eyes stayed on me longer and again I told him how great he and his band were and he said "Sit down," so I pulled out a chair across the table from him. Then I started to pinpoint all the different songs that I really enjoyed off his albums—some of them almost unknown. I counted on that. Like "Goodbye Yesterday," like how it talks to me instead of playing.

"It shows how close the musicians work—you know that the music is in front of them, but no arranger, no charts could do it for you—it was the energy of the group that pulled it together, that made it talk." I told him this and more about "Preach and Teach," and he was nodding his head and not leaning back anymore. He was leaning forward on his table, looking at me, nodding his head. "You know," I said, "with you, it's not just jamming. It's structure pushed to the end in sound." We sat in silence for a few minutes thinking about it.

"*Yeah*, you do understand," he said. Then he kind of grinned that wide smile of his. "Hard to talk about, isn't it? Easier to play."

"If you're you," I said. "I'm still trying."

"You know," he said, "interviewers are always asking me about the future of music. Hell I don't know about that. For me it's playing two hours here, then going down the road to Muncie, Indiana. It's the next night for me. Nothing more." His hands still now and then, I saw them for the first time.

"You don't have any calluses," I said.

"Hell no I don't. If the pressure's right the sticks don't rub." He grinned again spreading his fingers on the table. Smooth. Magic.

Just then I noticed some kids standing off to the left of us waiting with their pencils and papers—finally having figured out who he was and who I wasn't. So I stood up to give them their turn and he reached out and grabbed my wrist. "Don't go," he said. "I'm not done talking to you." So I sat down. My wrist was burning and I knew that the next time I played, the next time my right hand had to make itself heard, it wouldn't be the same. "Sit down," he said, "I got a few more minutes before I have to play to this airport hangar." He gestured around the arena, the high steel-beamed ceiling, the cold aluminum walls painted yellow, pink, blue. It would never be the same for me again.

He held out his hand for pencils and paper and a guy stepped forward, a couple more shuffling behind him. Wondering who I was, sitting there like a friend.

"I really like your 'Sing, Sing, Sing,' " he said to Rich. Adding "My name's George Drayton." Rich looked up at me sideways and winked and told George Drayton "I'm going to play 'SSS' and 'Wipeout' in a medley just for you." The dumb ass should have known it was Krupa's theme song. I suddenly had a feeling for what Buddy Rich had to deal with, the wanting to be liked and understood and the people who kill off any generosity you might feel for the public out there. Like the ones who come to hear his band—they're all looking for the drum solo—you can see their eyes light up as if the stage lights suddenly got switched around. They don't understand the dynamics and togetherness. They know the finished product in a half-assed way, but not how it comes about. Even the critics in the early days would say he plays too loud, or throws rim shots in where they don't belong. *Now* they know what they're hearing.

We talked for a few more minutes—then he said he had to go. Gave me a stick of gum—Dentyne. He stood up and leaned over the table and did a quiet roll with his hands to my shoulder. "I think you'll make it," he said. "I'll be hearing you some day." And he was gone. I guess I heard the rest of the concert. But now being there meant something else to me. And when I hit home that night that stick of gum went into my drum. Was there now. A small pink lump. I look at it just before I begin to play.

Gretel still wasn't back so I practiced a while longer. Then I moved to the bed and lay back, still hearing the sounds, my own sounds this time, and I lay there for one hour. Not sleeping but waiting for show time to come round. When she arrived with the sandwiches I ate them. When Vince called to check the program I talked. But I was hearing other things, I was making my own program for tonight.

Finally, I must have slept for a few hours because pretty soon Vince was pounding on the door yelling "how we going to make it without our practice?" I knew what he meant. He plays a cool sax—sliding notes around like melted butter then pulling them together with a tension that tells in his back, in the way his arms move toward his sides when he gets up for his solo run. We might have made it, Vince and I; maybe he'll keep something together. "Meet you in the lobby," I yelled.

We took three changes of costume and all went in one van over to the club. We started out tonight in our tuxes, then switched to our sequined jump suits that remind me of kids' Dr. Denton pajamas, ending up in jeans. All a part of the act. Jack was driving and putting on his cuff links at the same time. He's a good guitarist and up-front man. Can talk to anyone—sliding his smile out over the audience behind his velvety voice. Carol, the vocalist, and he were a good pair. She was filing her nails. Gretel was out shopping.

The stage loomed in the back of the place away from the bar and the lighting was O.K. Bad was bad. O.K. was good. There're a few early drunks sitting around before going home to the wife and kids and the mashed potatoes—they'd be moving along as soon as the sound built—it always happened. I took a run on my drums—did some rolls—soft then faster and faster. I hit each drum firm getting that crisp beat, starting with the snare and ending up with the floor tom-tom and then one closing beat on the bass to cut it off sharp. I set out two sets of new sticks because I'd been breaking one or two a night. Then I rolled up my pant legs and sat there sipping coffee. Vince was off talking to the waitresses, trying to line something up for later—much later. It's hard—you had fifteen minutes here and there to make contact, change clothes and sound like you're not coming on too strong. He's good-looking in a seedy sort of way and even then he's about ninety per cent unsuccessful. I just let it happen if it's going to. Sometimes some classy groupies showed up two, three nights in a row and you knew they wanted to be asked out. Sometime they think you'll be a temporary drug source, but they got us all wrong. If we find it we use it, but we don't travel with the stuff. Or play. If cops are even a little suspicious in some of those one-horse towns they'll rip your van apart in the middle of a cornfield—drum sets, suitcases, instruments, speakers, music. It happened once when Jack had some coke from another musician at a gig. But it wasn't on us. Who the hell wanted to be looking for bail in Boone, Iowa?

We were about ready to play, so I changed into my high-heeled shoes for a better angle. We started out with show songs, dance music—moving toward two shows a night. My solo was in the second. I usually started light, played something basic that people can tap their feet to. Then I built up by getting louder, and faster, bringing it back down to nothing then building to a finale with a very fast single-stroke roll. My sticks were moving so fast you couldn't see them. People related to a set of drums before any other instruments—I guess because it was obvious what a drummer did—it's so physical.

We started playing and people started coming in. The usual crowd—single people needing movement and noise, countermen, clerks from the local record and sheet-music stores. Bored couples. And a drummer or two. I've met one or two in at least half the towns. Some I looked forward to seeing, some I hated running into again.

We didn't get any requests yet. That'd come later in the evening after a show, after Carol had gone into her act. A few songs. Talking at the tables, telling women about the men they're with. Always on their side. Gretel wasn't here yet. I missed her. But it wasn't reason enough to make her want to stay.

While we were playing "Preach and Teach" something felt different. I moved into a double stroke roll. Not too loud, just testing. It was a feeling. And then I was going faster and my sticks were almost floating across the drums, washing the high hat, the cymbal and snare with rushes of sound. Solid sound. And suddenly I knew I had to stop right there. It was happening and I wasn't going to let it happen yet. Gretel wasn't here. And I was afraid of what it meant for both of us. But I had to be sure so I changed into a quiet single stroke, moving to the sounds I'd heard on my Buddy Rich albums, and my hands were going places they hadn't been before, moving to sounds I'd dreamed of playing, sounds I'd played in my sleep, and tonight they were mine. They were in my muscles and fingers as if they'd always been there—even though I knew they hadn't, but this time I hoped they weren't ever going away.

I slowed way down as Jack moved into his bass solo and then we took one more run at the chorus before ending. Then I sat there feeling the sticks in my hands, rolling them between my fingers like magic wands. I felt my back relax and move into a smaller tighter arc as I sat there marking that place and that time. The bar stretching off into the distance of lights and neon noise. Gretel now at our table center front. Gretel in her beaded Indian blouse. The brown coffee mug on the floor beside a bottle of Schlitz. Me at the drums, at twenty-six.

We took a break and I changed into my jumpsuit fast. Then I joined Gretel at the table. I wanted to tell her but I also wanted her to hear it first—without my words getting in the way. Anyway she avoided my eyes so I ordered a beer. The tables were filling up. Sounds, smells starting to multiply into that magic of late night movement. A girl at the table next to us raised her glass to me like a salute. She had beautifully manicured nails—painted green. I nodded politely.

"I went to the bus station today. Checked out the fare to home," Gretel said, finally looking at me. Her eyes were tired. She used to look more alive slaving in the Head Start program where she was working when we met. "But I haven't got the ticket."

"Is that what you want?" I asked. My stomach felt like a drum tuned too tight. I knew what she wanted but now I wasn't sure I'd ever be able to get the whole thing together. I covered her hand with mine.

"I don't know what I want anymore. This just isn't enough even if we wanted the same thing. You big and famous on the drums. Us." She looked around the noisy room and I followed her glance to the stage, to the light glinting on the steel rims of the drums.

"We *are* us," I said but she didn't hear.

"I mean what makes someone give up. I feel like giving up and you're still out there playing." There were tears in her eyes and she blinked fast to spread them away.

"You want to know where being on the road ends for us?" She pulled her hand away, but I caught her fingers, could feel the turquoise ring I'd given her. "You're afraid I won't know." I knew she was because I had the same fear—living on a dream till the real end of everything. It was almost enough to walk me out of that club, my arm around her, the sticks and drums left behind. Almost enough.

She nodded. "And I know I'd keep asking. Wanting two things at once. Like I don't want to go now but I think I'm going anyway. For a while. Maybe I'll be back in a week. Round trip." She wiped her eyes and laughed up at me. It was a laugh too weakly struck to carry, but, God, I loved her for that smile. Then she clinked her glass with mine.

"I might get there before you do," I said. I missed her already. Her waiting for me at tables. Sleeping, turning when I turned. Her trivia games on the road as we zig-zag across route eighty just to break the monotony. Getting off to the country roads for a while.

"Don't say that, Tony. I don't want to expect you."

She was right. There was nothing for me to say that I could say. Vince and Jack were back on stage. Tuning up. The others were coming back fast. I gave Gretel's hand a squeeze. "I have to play. We'll talk later."

"I'll be back for the last show," she said. The light played on the beads of her blouse as she sighed. Softer than drums. Her lips smiled. I kissed her fast. I loved her, but I left to play.

Close to the next break I looked out through the haze, the smoke now thick with words, perfume sprayed on too heavily in the ladies' room. Through the conversations, words going as much past the other person as our music, past people not used to listening to anything beyond their own pulse. And with the drums I had two. I looked out through this, looked for the few who made it all come together for me and them. I look for the one person alone, here for listening. The one who was watching my hands go to where they're supposed to be, craning his neck to watch my feet make the beat.

These people were the ones I leaned toward, the ones I played to. They knew it, and I knew they knew it. And sometimes during a break I would go and sit at their tables. I listened to things Buddy Rich must have heard a million times. But I'm not tired of it yet, maybe because it wasn't true—that I'm the greatest. But I liked to hear it and I talked back, I looked at them straight. It was the same way I played. Sometimes they couldn't handle it—me coming to them, my hand on the back of a chair ready to join them if asked—maybe they didn't have the next three questions memorized—so I moved on. I loved them just the same, but I moved on, doing us both a favor. A time and a place and all that crap. I've been there.

That night I sat with Harry Ratch, an ex-drummer turned history teacher. He told me that once in St. Louis he sat in for Flip Belotti when he had had an emergency operation. Three nights in that band. He was the High School hero. History went down pretty easily for the next few months.

I ordered a beer, keeping to my limit of two while playing. Harry was drinking beer too. He was past the physical fitness of a drummer—it was hard to be overweight in this business—but I could tell by the way his arms moved, his shoulders moved, that he once sat behind a set. Suddenly I saw myself ten years from now sitting in The Embers in Erie, Pennsylvania. Talking to some young kid. Telling him about the time I talked to Buddy Rich. Pulling my back straight to hide the tire around my waist. Hoping he'll offer to let me take a turn at his drums. Wishing I hadn't had three drinks already.

It hadn't happened yet. I focused back on Harry Ratch. He told me that Flip Belotti once said that the thing for beginners is to always practice. "If you're right-handed, do it with your left. There's always practicing to be done when you're not behind the drums." Harry was passing this advice along to me. I accepted it graciously. It made sense. I told him I hoped to see him again in the next two weeks. Maybe he could sit in on a couple of numbers. For a moment his eyes lost their sad history.

"I'll be here," he said sitting back. "I'll be here." It felt good to make someone's night.

I broke my sticks in one of the first numbers and started working with a new pair. Then we began to play the medley that led into my solo. Again I just moved into the drums. I held off till the last moment, catching the beat at the last possible second, almost afraid to know if it stayed, afraid to trust my knowing. But man, it was there.

I could feel it again and I listened to my wrists making the music I was born to hear. I was loose and tight at the same time. My wrists were loose and my forearms were keeping the pressure under control. I was arching over the set. I looked for Gretel and she was watching me. And she knew. I was playing the answer. Her eyes were sad and happy at the same time; her hands flat on the table, still. And I was moving back and forth toward the sounds I needed to make, toward the sound I knew Vince heard because he stood up, and—still playing—he stood up and turned and saluted me with his sax. I knew that he was hearing what was happening to me as my legs were tight against my jeans and my feet were wearing shoes I didn't feel and I thought: this is what I always wanted to know from Buddy Rich. What do you feel? When I'm as fast as you are, will I feel what you feel, will I know?

These questions went through my head like lightning, their smell remained and now I knew. And it was what I knew that stopped me thinking. That pulled my sounds out of the forest of tables and noise like an ancient drum in some tribal ritual. It was my night. I heard the voices in the club lose their timbre, saw the heads turn. There was no going back to Erie, only the nights like these to keep me whole.

People were starting to stand now. And Harry Ratch must have felt in his heart that he was helping me to what he never made. I was glad he was there to help me move, and there were no voices then. And one by one the band was dropping back and out, and then only Vince and I were left—his fluid notes winding around the sticks I was moving but no longer felt. We were making circuits of sound. He was turned facing me because he felt it and was making his pledge with the notes he made before he too dropped out and I was left. I was dripping wet and winging it. The spotlight hung before me like a suspended meteor. I played as if waiting for it to hit. For one half hour I played. □

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On the NAR Newsbeat

Shock . . .

Mitten-sniffers ask public to extend trust, tolerance

BRIDGEPORT (AP)—Mitten-sniffers upset by a sensational mitten-sniffing case here are making a last-ditch effort to convince the public that there is nothing inherently wrong with sniffing mittens at second-hand clothing stores—provided you intend to buy them afterwards.

The effort, led by a group calling itself the Bridgeport-Babylon Committee, is seeking to counteract a wave of "vengeful acts" against mitten-sniffers in Bridgeport, a city where they once felt they could live without prejudice.

Gary Harper, 34, a Bridgeport-Babylon Committee leader, said the "vengeful acts" were sparked by publicity over the arrest of 18 schoolchildren, the entire sophomore class of the exclusive Harkness School, for allegedly sniffing all the mittens at a local thrift shop—and then purchasing earmuffs.

"The Committee is not officially condemning the schoolkids," Harper said, "but by stressing our own preference for sniffing only mittens we intend to buy, we hope to curtail this unprecedented attack upon the entire mitten-sniffing population."

Harper, a Navy veteran whose wife and children left him six years ago when he announced his penchant for sniffing mittens, and sometimes mop handles, claimed that local politics were "making the most" of the thrift shop incident.

"Very, very little would have been heard about this case, if the District Attorney weren't up for reelection," he charged. "Personally I'm still willing to vote for the man," he said, rubbing a purple bruise on his upper arm, "but these noogie raids have got to stop."

Echoing Harper's concern, Herbert Wellington III, the impassioned young art director of the *Mitten-Sniffer Community News,* said: "Granted, it's not pleasant to hear about someone sniffing mittens he doesn't intend to buy. But before John Q. Public sets any more of our neckties afire, perhaps he'd better ask himself how sure he is that the schoolkids didn't actually intend to buy the mittens.

"Haven't all of us changed our minds at one time or another?" he went on, eloquently. "Hasn't each and every one of us fully intended to do something, really *planned* on doing it, even to the point of writing it down, maybe, or promising someone with genuine sincerity that we would do it—*and then not done it?*" Wellington paused to take a deep whiff off a 1949 oil filter. "Human nature is a sticky wicket that I'd advise people to think about," he concluded.

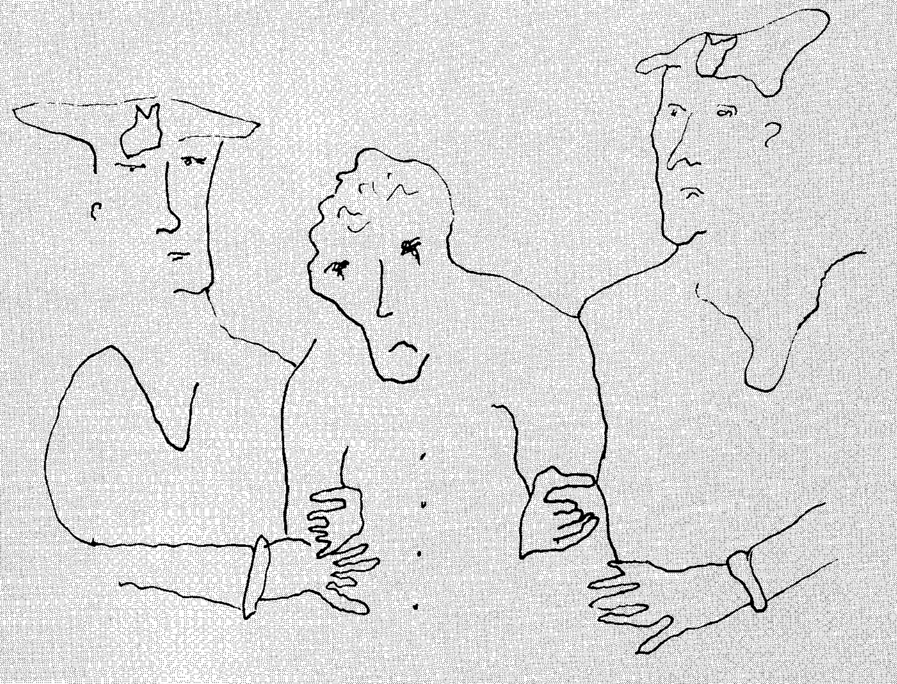
In his small, poorly-lit office, Ernest Oleo, pastor of the mitten-sniffers' church here, carefully raised his voice above the chants of two dozen sit-in demonstrators to assail society for the purchase-less sniffings.

"The pressure, the pressure from society, causes all sniffers to rush through the preliminaries," Pastor Oleo stated. "We get nervous. We get quivering. All the mittens start to look as though they smell alike. Maybe if society weren't always on our backs, we could take the time to really find out, you know, which ones do and which ones don't look good enough to buy."

Like Harper and Wellington, the pastor disparages the term "inhaler" and prefers "sniffer" on the grounds that " 'inhaler' sounds like there isn't any love involved—another point we're afraid the D.A. is trying to promote."

The Committee, which put the word "Babylon" in its name to recall the massacre of mitten-sniffers in Babylon, New York, in 1655, says it is urgent that the public examine its conscience before things get out of hand.

Said the pastor: "Bridgeport used to have a reputation of being one of three or four cities in the country where a mitten-sniffer could feel free to be a mitten-sniffer. I thought it was a place where I could finally realize my potential to be me," he said, as his necktie burst into flames. "Now I'm beginning to wonder."



ACCUSED MITTEN-SNIFFER: Bridgeport police flank Harness School sophomore Joey King, one of 18 charged with sniffing mittens at a thrift shop here with no intent to buy. (DAR photo)

. . . and After-Shock

BRIDGEPORT (UPI) — Bridgeport District Attorney Charles “The Hammer” McKowksi this week denounced as “laughable” an article in the new edition of World Book Encyclopedia which calls him “the father of modern-day mitten-sniffing,” an article which he says will have no effect on his reelection campaign because “it's so obviously a sick lie.”

In response to the article, McKowski called one of his famous down-home press conferences to say: “Here we have yet another example of what public servants in our day and age must put up with from those in the encyclopedia business who thrive on rumor, hearsay, and gossip of the most disgusting kind. It is just incredible to me that irresponsible publications like World Book are allowed to print trash like this, and don't think I take it seriously for one second.”

World Book based the article in part on sworn testimony of 104 thrift shop owners in and around the San Francisco area who complained to police in 1964 that McKowski, then a law student across the bay at Berkeley, was “wreaking havoc” in their winter outerwear departments.

The thrift shop owners are quoted in World Book as saying McKowksi would saunter into their shops just before closing time, whistling snatches from “Mary Poppins” or “Camelot.” Casually he would make his way to the outerwear department. “He looked very ordinary in his Arabian headdress and flippers,” one thrift shop owner said, “I took him for just another honors student.”

Once in the outerwear department, however, McKowski would reportedly turn mean and menacing.

“He whipped out his gun and told me to turn my head,” said Olivia Kankershank, who has since gone into the beauty parlor business. “He said he had a craving to do something and that if I peeked he'd blow my head off.” Then, according to Ms. Kankershank, there was “that awful sound of heavy sniffing—like a pressurized air pump being swallowed by a baby pig, or something.”

D.A. laughs off charge that he is ‘father of modern mitten-sniffing’

When she looked around, Ms. Kankershank said, the second-hand mittens were all over the floor. McKowski was gone.

From the barbecue pit of his 16 room chateau, where he called this week's press conference, McKowski made it clear he wasn't going to refute the mitten-sniffing charges point by point. Instead, he indicated he has documentary evidence that World Book personnel were paid “hard cash” by his political opponents. Asked to show his proof, the D.A. laughed and laughed and laughed. He began sporting with reporters in his famous way by tossing raw sirloin at them and mimicking the reporters' expressions.

A LIGHT MOMENT: D. A. McKowski enjoying the interplay with reporters during press conference held this week in his barbecue pit. *(DAR photo)*

The World Book article goes on to state that the 104 thrift shop owners who complained to police were given a lie detector test and each one passed it. McKowski was given the lie detector test twice, and failed both times.

Asked about this, and about the report that he paid the thrift shop owners $25 apiece to drop their complaints, McKowski stopped tossing raw sirloin and looked thoughtful. “Let's get serious now,” he said. “Who wants a drink?”

The World Book article also quotes Berkeley law school officials as saying McKowski's mitten-sniffing habit eventually sparked a school-wide petition to remove him from the sun-filled campus.

“We in the administration felt sorry for him,” said one official who asked to remain anonymous, “but we honored the petition because it was the most clear-cut case of armed mitten-sniffing we'd ever seen, and because we were under pressure from other law schools across the country where mitten-sniffing chapters had sprung up, all venerating McKowski as their leader.”

* * *

Just exactly where McKowski spent the years after his removal from law school in 1964 until he appeared in Bridgeport in 1975 as a candidate for D.A. running on a heavily anti-mitten-sniffing platform, is not known, according to World Book.

The question was put to McKowski at the close of this week's press conference. Standing on the diving board in the cabana where the conference had been moved, the D.A. laughed and laughed and laughed. “The good people of Bridgeport will figure out where the truth lies and vote accordingly,” he said. He bounced high off the board, turned a somersault in mid-air, and mimicked reporters' expressions before scoring a spectacular cannonball.

–Investigative reporting by Daniel Asa Rose

Comments the Fireman

Up, polishing the big engines, that takes much of the time, every day, and the long hoses have to be coiled, too, like so many canvas sausages verging on the infinite, or rotund thin men. At dawn, or what suffices for it, we start, if not before, some of us sliding down the brass pole, but most preferring to clump down the stairs in their rubber boots saving the pole for fun later. Then rags are taken in hand and the red enamel of the engines is lovingly caressed and shined to a sheen rivaling that of the fires which they will attend. Grime, soot, smoke, abuse will dull the sheen by day's end, but at the dawn no sun is brighter than a newly readied fire engine.

When the alarm comes in we are up and out in under thirty seconds, perhaps twenty-five, but there is no excitement shrieking through the streets, no, we wait for that until we see the fire, there are too many false alarms. A false alarm during a blackout once resulted in the death of a child wandering unnoticed in the street. There is no excitement. Fires are transient things. If we waited long enough the fire would go away, but it is our duty to extinguish its brief life sooner even than normal, like exorcising the ghost of someone in a coma, or washing a pair of pants with the person wearing them. In time there are two nows that encompass a fire in which we try to perform our task, no one cares about before or after. We are not unlike musicians.

At one time I kept track of each fire I attended. Now I take note of the times I get to sleep. There is some evolutionary tendency towards nonexistence of the latter. I am sure that biologists will be quite interested when they learn that some firemen have not slept for three or four years.

We live in cities. I am told that somewhere there are places with volunteer firemen that go out only occasionally. I myself have never seen one of these places but it is nice to think that they may exist. I do know that the Milky Way exists. This does not affect my perception of reality. Sometimes you think about it but it really doesn't matter.

Now, today, or yesterday, we have been called to a fire. We are at the fire. A great burning building. Long streams of water root in the smoke like snakes looking for holes.

At first, the heat and smoke were frightening. But what really gets you is the noise. You never expect what toasts marshmallows and illumined Abe Lincoln's reading to roar with such stupendous fury and vengeance. It sucks in air like a huge fan and blows bits of ash and pieces of things out the top. When I was in school, fire fighting school, we used to wonder what it would take to blow out a big fire, how big a mouth, a hurricane. I know now nothing could. The voice is too loud, speaks with too much insistent authority. We resort to slow poison. It takes time to get accustomed to approaching a big fire. You must learn to ignore sensory impressions, just concentrate on seeing. After awhile one learns to step assuredly forward. Like fighting battles, I suppose, you must ignore and then forget whatever it is that affects you in the first place—fear, some say. In my case it is the audacity involved in pitting a body, equipment and mind arrived at after five days of exhaustive training against six stories of burning wood that made me hesitate at first. All of that goes away, eventually, and you realize that no matter what you do, fire burns at a mean temperature of 2000° C.

Since today or perhaps the day before yesterday or yesterday one man has been killed at the fire when a roof collapsed on him. There are no living inhabitants in this building. We have had to hook up to the auxiliary mains, so much water has been used. The mains are under the streets, naturally, like subconscious knowledge. In the summer kids open the hydrants, reducing the pressure to zero. They dance like sprites, evil desires. In the winter things freeze and we use foam. At least the adversary remains constant, like death, like orbiting suns. Should the air vanish from the Earth there would be no fires; often I have thought of this. This would require some kind of miracle. It would require another miracle for people to remain alive.

This fire resembles a wall, it is a sheeting effect which means we have lost. The coruscation flails like ants, birds of prey, we writhe at its base, hooking up hoses that have to have water in them so they're not too hot to handle. Reds and bright colors, everything is

bright, must be bright, for infiltration. We are the usurpers here. Chrome, fire trucks running like blood, or eyes with tears from heat. We must take on new aspects. This environment demands adjustments which can't be made. Or else you lose or forget something which was there before, might be necessary again, but not at present.

Taking chances, you approach the burning, arm upraised, white suit livid against the glare. Someone said there might be someone in there, a kid, a mother. It is always thus. Never a drunkard. Never a rapist. A kid. A mother. You have to go. It is impossible. Nothing could survive this. You walk on melted plates of metal, pipes, sprigs of cement fall, you look, wilting; these suits can only take so much. A window which emits clotted smoke, has been for days. You look. No one can be there. This organic process, growth, it is too much for you, you are a bacterium witnessing a rooting, destruction, you can only hope to move. Back out through the smoke. You musn't run, a fireman never runs from a burning building. All strata have their rules, not necessarily intelligent.

Water is curiously ineffective against a fire gone out of control. You can increase it and increase it until the very ocean starts to fall but it is gone as if it too feeds the flames. It is vaporized, changed by the situation into which it is thrust; reform is impossible. Water will not rehabilitate rubble.

by Eric Johnson

We are like kings seeking answers in a well of oblivion, a maelstrom which crushes aspirations only after they are embarked upon. On some days we move the trucks, seeking new angles. Others ask what is going on. I have collapsed, awakened, collapsed. I question my motives. Surely this is not what I would do normally? Does the immediacy of a situation preclude logical analysis, rational cognition, conclusion? Yes. Situations possess the characteristics upon which logic is later based. Such as falling over a precipice. At the time you do not consider things in a coherent manner. Or if you do, you have already mastered the situation.

Some days ago, or days hence, a truck breaks down. Like entropy, fatigue sets into the engine. Technology can keep up with problems as long as they do not persist, then it breaks. We lost fifty thousand gallons an hour of pumping capacity. Another unit is promised.

The flames have induced a curious effect. Everything jumps, even the not burning, everything moves as though reflected in waved mirrors, insubstantial; even perusal of the feet does not help, one stands in swirling tide-bound sands. They have dispatched a great crane above the building to rain water down upon it. Men go up with breathing devices, mountain climbers, like Zeus without the power of lightning and precious little storm. It does not help.

It is easier to stand mothlike before the monolith of shaking combustion than to turn one's back on it. To turn at all, to walk, requires immense amounts of will. Living like this, eating at great intervals, staying in suits that chafe the skin, or heavy coats that weigh you down much more than the heat, one becomes aware that, physically, rest is the most necessary thing, to rest is to forget, to renew, reality is so harsh that some kind of escape is needed, therefore the state of rest is the highest evolutionary goal, otherwise we are not perfectly suited for the environment.

Like angels, or independents not union men, helicopters have come, flitting about the towering corona like minnows, dumping chemicals, water on the blaze. It is not to be explained why they were not here weeks ago. Or why the building was built in the first place. Existence induces our poetic obligation. So says the fire chief.

A number of days ago other firemen arrived. They say more will come. We are running short of everything. The flames have consumed all but the skeleton of the building. It will last a long time. In obscurity, smoke drawing wordless pages before true events, I work at prying ways through the rubble to plant explosive charges to destroy the fire's cohesion, to alter it. It is too hot. When my oxygen runs short I retreat in confusion.

They say we will continue to fight this fire, though containment must be impossible. A month ago I had wondered why we had shined the engines so well beforehand, what purpose it served. It all glints in certain lights, especially at night, or during the day, when flame and smoke make the sun incorrect, or hide it altogether. I will consider the fire. Someone must. ☐

HOW I FOUND STUDEBAKER

I could have found Ford. Or Chevrolet. Or Plymouth. Or any of a number of motorized shoeboxes currently rollerskating down the road.

But with us, it just had to be Studebaker.

Why?

Well, my old man had owned one. A red and white 1955 Conestoga station wagon. And if not in hot pursuit of the wild animal of ecstasy, it had carried us far and wide on the trail of the elusive and mystifying trout and had yielded only once. To a porkchop bone.

We fished in places with names like Mt. Tom Brook and Breakheart Pond, in those New England hills. And the waters were like whiskey and they made you drunk to see them and they flowed whiskey-colored through the rest of your life and we owed it all to Studebaker—me and the old man.

He always smoked a cigar and he had friends like Art 'Colonel' Beauregard and Frank Tripp. While not Studebaker men, these characters were the Laurel and Hardy of trout fishermen. They argued over dry flies and how to cut brush and who had caught the most fish. I can see them now, buried in trout-shaped graves and angling in the sky, trying once more for the Ultimate Trout.

Would I have known about them were it not for Studebaker?

Furthermore, I had an uncle who was the black sheep of the family. He had a gold watch that could simply astound. An ice cube on the end of the watch chain he claimed was a diamond. What low thing in my nature made me think it was glass? He drove a skyblue bullet-nose Champion. How could I think he was driving anything less than the sky?

But there were many things I did not know about these cars called Studebakers. That there were great and unusual and even offbeat men and women behind them, I suspected. But that there were ghosts behind the wheels and inside the motors and in the body and in the design . . .

The Mary Roberts Rinehart Memorial Car

Isn't it just like an unknown writer to endorse a product that, while not unknown, is headed into the out-of-context sunset?

Allow me to explain.

First there is the 'text,' as we all know. It is, simply: everyone who does not drive a Studebaker.

The 'out-of-context' is everyone who does.

Studebaker is a symbol. Anyone who knows the car or the company or the history knows quality. It was not, as one Studebaker man said, because of an inferior product that the company went out of business. Alan Watts said the American people are not materialists. Materialists love material. Americans love junk.

But some do not love junk.

It's a long story but this is how I found Studebaker:

I was, you see, working as a janitor on long Wyoming winter nights and I had to walk the proverbial two miles to work, etc., etc. I knew I was a great writer, but still I wondered what I was doing cleaning toilet bowls at eleven o'clock at night. With some inner prompting and much encouragement from my wife, I decided to believe in myself. I applied for a literary grant from the Mary Roberts Rinehart Foundation in New York. This was in the dead of winter, after I had quit my job. The grant came in along with a blizzard. With $100 we bought a 1961 Lark VIII which has taken us over 20 thousand miles already and has wanted nothing save gas and oil.

We first saw the car sitting at the end of the line (like us). The line was of old cars which were not Studebakers. Now this Lark had a bright yellow stripe down the hood and over the roof and trunk. The rest of the car was a reddish copper brown.

It was a family car gone wrong, a parody of a racing car.

It was the perfect car for an enterprising and slightly out-of-context young author.

And so it was that I found Studebaker.

–Michael Andryc

MILK RUN

Salty Dog, he don't get too nervous about things. I mean, he has hauled everything from nitro to cut-glass and crystal and it ain't like he got his Class-One yesterday. Whatever come up, he has always took it in stride. I know of at least three jacknifes and one head-on he has walked out of with nuthin more than cuts, black eyes and a ruined disposition. So when I went with him on the milk run down Boneyard Mountain, I didn't think it was gonna be no big thing.

We was comin down in a non-sectioned truck full of milk cans when it seemed to me we was goin a little fast even for Salty Dog, considerin it was a narrow road with plenty of devil's hairpins and a goodly drop on my side, naturally. Salty Dog don't take to no comments on his drivin but when I noticed he was hangin on that wheel, cuttin to the right, and cuttin to the left and gettin red in the face, I says, "Salty Dog, do you have power steerin in this rig?" and he says, "Only power in this here rig is the power of Salty Dog." While that oughta been comfortin, somehow it wasn't, because we was goin faster and faster and the scenery was whizzin by too fast to be admired and it did seem to me that the wheel on my side wasn't on the road too often and them run-offs looked more and more invitin only Salty Dog he never took no advantage of them and so I decided to get my mind on other things.

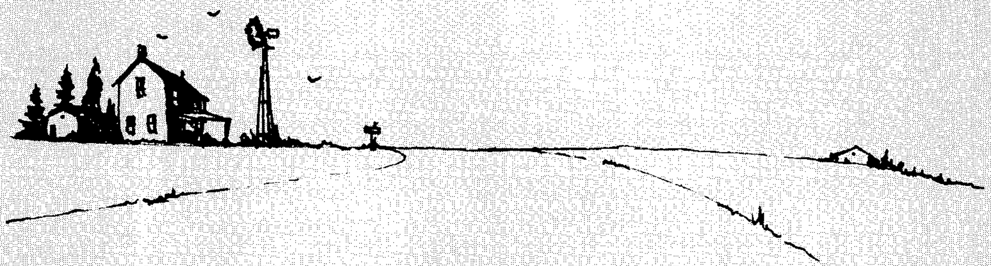
Halfway down this mountain there's this valley with meadows and farms in it and I was thinkin how it might be nice to be a farmer instead of a trucker . . . just one of them crazy thoughts people get . . . and then comes this next curve and it was comin pretty fast and Salty Dog, he don't seem to take no notice of that fact and I says, "Salty Dog, there is this here curve comin up," and Salty Dog who is glassy-eyed now says, "That's too goddamned bad," and just keeps goin straight ahead which is down my side of the mountain, through a little creek, into the valley, and we're tearin across the meadow toward a pasture, through the fence, into the pasture, with the milk cans rattlin back and forth so loud you couldn't have a real conversation so I didn't ask Salty Dog why he didn't slow nor brake nor nuthin, and to tell the truth, I didn't wanna ask because I had an idea the answer would spoil my day and then we're goin for this old farmer who's just rakin away like he's got all day to get outta our way and I'm hangin out the window yellin and Salty Dog is yellin and at the very last minute, this farmer looks up and sees us. He walks . . . HE DOES NOT RUN . . . he walks slow and easy out of our way. We do not stop, we keep right on goin through his pasture, his garden, the left half of his front porch, a flock of chickens, a good part of his barn, three haystacks, and I am prayin there is a road somewhere we can get onto, and I look out of the window and it seems the farmer has now got the picture and he is not walkin no more, he is runnin shit green in circles and finally we come to a dead stop three feet from this bunch of very upset cows.

Well, the cows are carryin on not to mention the farmer so we roll up the windows and lock the doors and sit there restin for a spell, Salty Dog and me, not talkin because there don't seem much to talk about except a certain embarassin puddle that each one of us is sittin in and the farmer he ain't in no mood to talk cordial, he's just screamin and jumpin up and down but we ain't listenin and finally I says, "Salty Dog, you was havin a little trouble with your brakes and your steerin, am I right?" and he just looks at me disgusted-like and don't answer and I says, "Salty Dog, what gear was you comin down in?" and he says, "13th," and I says, "Salty Dog, *why* was you comin down the side of Boneyard Mountain in 13th gear?" and he says, "Because, Willy, just before we lost the brakes and the steerin, Willy, the clutch went, Willy, so I didn't have no helluva lotta choice, now *did* I, Willy?"

And that seemed reasonable so I didn't say no more and we got outta the cab with our legs shakin and our stomachs upside down, past the cows and past the farmer who was still screamin and we went to check the milk, expectin it to be runnin out of all sides of the trailer but there wasn't no runnin milk, only 105 cans of Pasteurized, Homogenized, First-Class, Grade-A Cottage Cheese.

Which is how I come to be in the dairy business. Got this nice little store by the side of the road and I surely do enjoy watchin them trucks go by. Last time I heard of Salty Dog, he had took up with this here meditation stuff and he went and shaved his head and is on this special kinda diet . . . Fruit and nuts but no meat and no fish and especially not no milk.

—*Donna Roazen*



DAVE SMITH

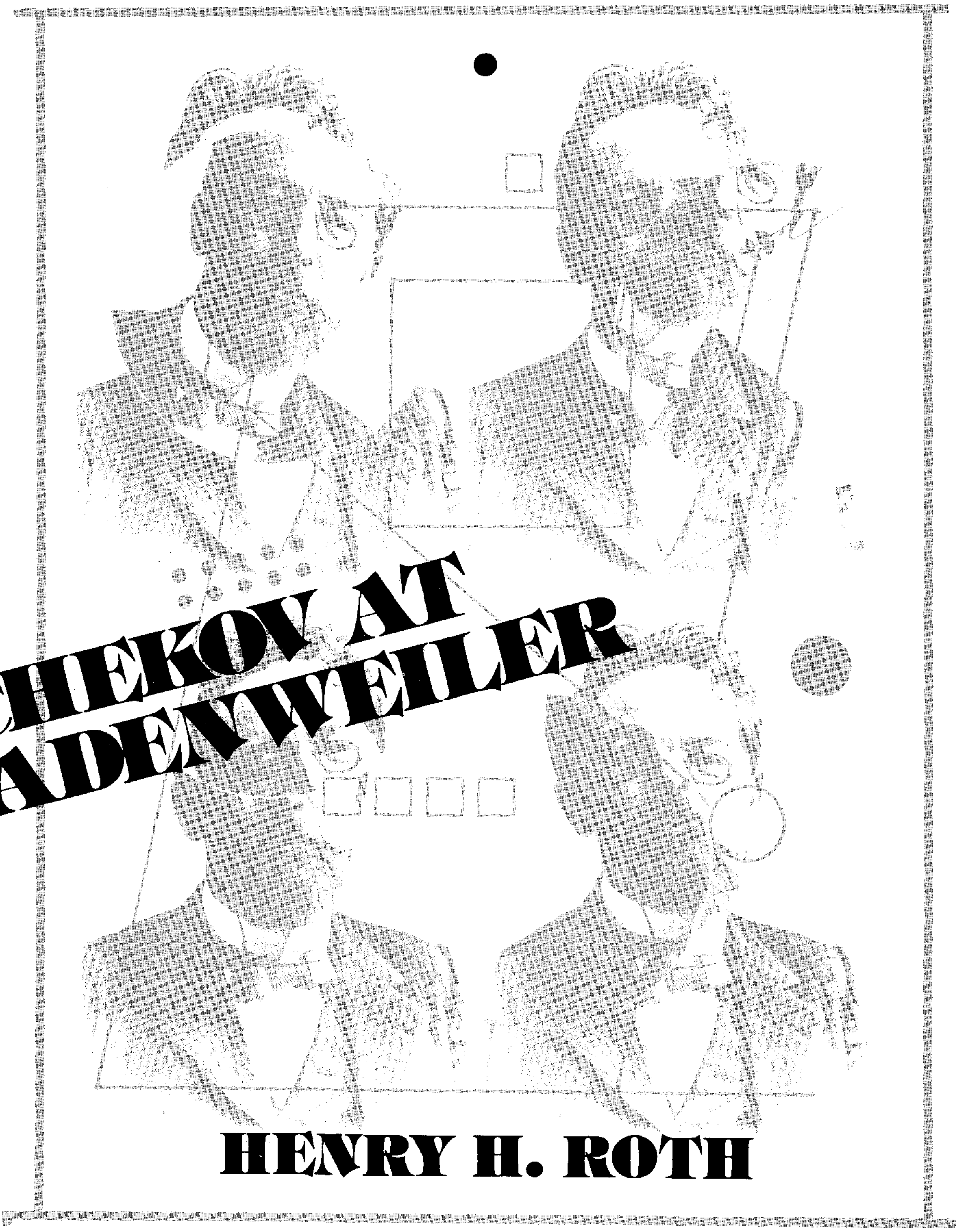
THESE PROMISES, THESE LOST, IN SLEEP REMAIN TO US

Night-black in the yard begins to glow, then shakes
the oaks heavy in sleep like an old dog's thighs.
This wakes a bird whose belligerent advance up limbs
reshapes the world we have known. His notes announce
what was left the day before, tricycle, toy, tree,
the newsworthy unchanged. Assiduously he sings
to make things so. He names. Hearing him, I break
from my bed of dark anxiety and the dream of a girl
sobbing at dusk for a favorite stone she's lost.
Like him, cries were all she had to summon back
her piece of the world. The scene replays and I see
I followed her up stairs, promising it all intact,
and lay me down on the toy-littered stage for prayer.

It's there I return at first light, and heavily wait.
The bird, encouraged by his story, tells another
louder than the first, making her bear blue-eyed,
bringing the breath of day to jingle her hung puppet.
He makes the dark retreat in every room, a sad light
ring the halls, as if he were meaning's journalist.
I, on the floor, lie listening, stone-numb and ache
at every inflexible angle of being, unable to rise,
hopelessly beyond any whistling I made in the dark,
more and less than song, for her. He pursues his work,
outlining house and car, alley and insomniac. This
chatter is what it takes. I watch her face float up,
bright, round as truth itself. Light's here, known.
The news goes on, her cat's at the door and mews,
dusk's color, a garbler at best, his intention unclear.

She leaps me by a yard, is gone, a far door slamming,
out into the somewhere of the grass, defining the fur
of a cat while I count what I'd gathered in her sleep:
a small kingdom of stones. All morning I think of her,
of rooms she cracks through like light and the gleaming
ground she sifts not for the lost but the not found.
And think, too, of the bird hunkered in green shadow
and silent, concocting words for a world full of cats.
Note by note by note we arrange what's known for song
while trees tower over us, spreading a storied gray-
gold that keeps what must be found, lost, and found.
At dusk I throw the stones back in the yard. The bird
makes his inventory, the oaks yawn and settle like saints.
All night stones glow like eyes, or like nothing
we could dream, unnamed, each a promise we must keep.

CHEKOV AT BADENWEILER



HENRY H. ROTH

Roy Behrens

During the long journey to Badenweiler, Chekov mumbled frequently—Absurd, absolutely absurd I should die now. What unspeakable stupidity! The air was clammy and the morning still far, far away as the ill writer roamed restlessly through the train. But once at Badenweiler, Chekov did not rail against absurdity nor did he invent excuses to snap at his loyal and patient wife. He only blasphemed the incompetent academic painter Joseph Brasz, a fool who had done his portrait some years ago—a portrait that now unfortunately hung in the Moscow Art Theatre. Chekov muttered—there is a terrible stench haloing the canvas. And there is much that is not me and much has been purposely torn from my image and left for grey shadow inside that damned picture. That creative swill of Brasz's still haunts and torments me. And it was a true fear and response for almost five years had passed and still the portrait was like an open, infected wound.

At Badenweiler Chekov was usually in gay spirits. And the gaiety was not feigned. Chekov simply embraced life and its myriad characters. He would never yield to a suddenly painful life drawing to inexorable finis. Chekov wrote letters to old friends inviting them to Badenweiler—this city of the living dead. Join me—Chekov wrote—with the idle rabble, be soothed and enchanted by well fed sick and the slothful hypochondriacs. Sniff, smell the rich dew topping lush grass. Come my friend. Visit, my friends. Listen to the silence. Every living thing has been snatched from the great heat. I lied. There is a dew but all the grass is burned dry. There are no sounds. Few sounds. It is a little like death here. Come, anyway. We shall create the sounds. And there will be no forced gaiety. We shall drink, play cards, carouse and dance. Become the scandal of Badenweiler. But Chekov only mailed one letter in his final stay at the well known spa. And no one visited but Nadya.

—I love only you, learn from you.

—Yes, but—

—You occupy all my thoughts and dreams. I have no moments except with you.

—We barely know each other, dear little one. Dear little one how flushed you are . . . more feverish than me.

—I waited for you. All Moscow wanted news and you wrote me.

—It's true. Only you.

—Because you feel the same.

—Because I respect and honor your intensity.

—You are my love and my master and I am not ashamed.

—When I die. Yes, I will be dead shortly. Will you promise to defile the portrait? See to it it never hangs in any gallery or museum.

—If you wish.

—It's not only vanity but truth should be served. I was never gloomy. The portrait lies.

—Of course, I will destroy it.

—My throat is terribly sore. I can barely see. I speak and see from the hills and mists of faint memory. I fear I am so feverish, dear one.

—May I lie down with you?

—My wife is solemn and angry. She, of course, has no wish that I die. And she yearns for no additional scandal. You and I must be discreet.

—Can we make love?

—We can try.

—Shall I stay here now?

—Lie with me, my Nadya.

Though near death and knowing it full well, Chekov remained in gay spirits. He realized he was acting out his story Lady with the Pet Dog and though much narrative was different, much was similar. Chekov felt old and young, jaded and innocent, dying and newly born. He was relieved and astonished to be in love and to be loved back so fiercely. He felt guilty using Nadya to deface the portrait, but it would create compassionate scandal to the press and public and Nadya would become a celebrity for a time. More friends should be here with me this afternoon. I should have posted those letters. But . . . ah too late—I look worse than the portrait.

We are both poor in bed at love making. Nadya too shy, too willing and I too ill, too willing and suddenly too shy. She makes me young and foolish. I would run away with her if I could. But I will die tomorrow or very possibly the next day.

Madame Chekov knew her husband was dying. She had feared a true circus death scene with caravans of friends, acquaintances, enemies, idlers and odd characters Anton always found and cultivated. Instead there was this frail pallid, tubercular-looking child. Nadya was a deer ready to flee without even detecting the presence of the hunter. Anton had always loved life, raced joyously towards people and situations. Diving into life's busy pool! That he should share his final days with such a young and ill-prepared child is more than ironic even for a Chekov vignette.

Madame Chekov was a true Badenweiler matron. She was friendly, played cards and flirted. The guests and staff considered her a gallant woman. Madame Chekov, in turn, knew Nadya was in a bed with a mortally ill husband who would rather kiss the bony cheeks of a silly child than rest his head on a familiar shoulder. But she realized Anton must have his game-playing.

Madame Chekov remembered the moment Nadya, disheveled and blazing with excitement, ran into the suite unannounced. She ran past the wife into the bedroom. Chekov laughed like an aging bull—tell me more, charming Nadya, what delicious gossip. You're a wonder with words, my dear. Idly Madame Chekov wondered if her famous husband could manage one more story relating the ironies of love, life and death and how one faces such inevitable dilemmas.

At Badenweiler during those last painful days and hours Chekov did attempt one more story. And succeeded. It was his gift to Nadya. He had never bought her a present, not even a stray sweet. Their meetings in Moscow and Yalta had been hurried, chancy, erratic trysts.

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And now he was chained to the soiled bed and armed only with his writing tablet. Chekov hurriedly began his gift.

No woman had ever totally accepted Chekov the way Nadya had. Now in this speeded-up sequence she quickly saw him for what he was and wasn't. He now did have the limp beard, the washed-out eyes, the odor, the chill hunch of shoulders and back of the Brasz portrait. But Nadya adored his infirmity and his blood-spattered handkerchief and clothes. He was her love and she was bathed in his presence. Soaked by his words and sweat, she was as limp as the invalid. Chekov could not deny her. He could not deny such feelings and he opened his tablet and his writing was no longer tentative. His fingers no longer shook at the effort. It would be his finest story. Conceived in pain and love it could be the ultimate fiction of his career. He had no doubt of its greatness. Chekov called the story "The Samovar."

Only once at Badenweiler did Chekov and Nadya leave his quarters. They strolled slowly to the railroad station. Chekov had been unusually quiet during the walk. He had wished to save his strength, until they reached a comfortable bench.

—It's a good thing I'm dying.

Nadya moaned and appeared sad and very ill.

Chekov laughed—I am a poor patient. I would drive my fellow doctors mad with frustration. It is of no importance now. I shall remember you best and last. You are my last memory. Here is my story. It is for you. It is only to say thank you and I love you. It bears such gentle burdens gladly.

—But I cannot accept.

—No need for publication. It is a private correspondence between us. The world is packed with my scribblings. It is my last story, please keep it. I shall never sit here again, Nadya, nor write a story again either. No, don't cry.

—I love you—she said.

Chekov replied softly—you are truly my last moment.

—Oh dear Anton never fear—I will destroy that painting. Brasz's scandalous image of you will vanish.

—Oh my lovely assassin.

Nadya cradled the story—Oh how I shall treasure this manuscript.

Chekov kissed her hands and rested his head upon her narrow, fluttering chest. People stared. Chekov only hoped he would not choke and cough up blood. And he willed his body to perform cordially and normally. Nadya felt Chekov shivering and shaking and thought it illness racking him. Now she cradled him. He desperately tried not to choke or cough. The sun beamed down at the nervous couple like a happy landlord dispensing favors. Nadya and Chekov napped lightly against one another. Two days later he was dead.

The Samovar
by A. Chekov

Is the samovar absolutely necessary to a social gathering? Is chatter irrelevant without a samovar? Of course, the samovar, a samovar, is the one possession, the one element linking serious talk and gossip to the swelling heights of a memorable evening.

With samovar as worthy companion and host, I have accordingly invited those persons who have directly and indirectly shaped and guided my life. A grandfather who bought his family out of serfdom, the nervous flunky father who tried too hard—the doting romantic mother—ambition and talent and luck in a happy mix—the first lady I loved and won and the last.

Chairs and couches are empty—ready the samovar—bring out sandwiches and pastry. Bring forth memory—pray not get too close to the coughing host but the friendly samovar beckons like a lighthouse too—let us begin. . . .

Chekov's funeral was a travesty only he could have written and approved of. A week after Chekov died, he was buried at Novodevichy Cemetery next to a cossack widow Aga Rookaventnikov. His body had been brought back to Moscow by a freight train whose signs proudly proclaimed *for oysters only*. There were two coffins aboard and many in the literary crowd attended the wrong funeral. Gorky cried with bitterness throughout the modest ceremony. Nadya sobbed. Only Madame Chekov seemed aware of all Chekovian vignettes following her husband to his grave. She smiled more than once during the funeral.

Nadya did not deface the Brasz portrait. Like the funeral it now symbolized to her the ambivalence that Chekov so cultivated. She saw it clearly the night after the funeral and understood that Madame Chekov alone fully accepted her husband's genius and weaknesses. Nadya felt Anton would forgive her not destroying the painting and would understand her giving the story to his wife.

Madame Chekov accepted the story. And led Nadya to the door. Before Nadya's astonished eyes the woman tore the manuscript to pieces and littered the sidewalk. It's over—she said to Nadya—we are both free and can even be friends one day. You are a wise child.

The Moscow sky was ballooned by shiny, transparent clouds. The streets were dirty and coated with dust. Nadya, pale and quivering with anticipation, headed home. People walked past in lazy, rambling strides. She was caught in dream and nightmare. She began to recite—At Badenweiler I fell in love; his name was Anton Chekov. He died. But we truly fell in love. Fell in love with the moment and each other. He died. I am alone. I am left. I shared his last present. Now that too is gone. Has life more lessons? Perhaps. Why am I not as frightened as before? Why do I no longer feel like a schoolgirl or shop girl? She saw people staring at her. She smiled. Kept talking, however, and walked briskly toward her parents' home. She had this silly feeling, more lessons would be arriving and she would endure forever. As she turned the final corner to her house, she was saying aloud—his name was Chekov and we loved each other. And I remain to love and be loved. He was more fortunate but I am left.

Then she was in the shadowy hallway of her house and she remembered most of the familiar smells and walked up the carpeted stairs still reciting her narrative. Still telling her tale—knowing it was only the beginning. . . . ☐

PLAYING·TENNIS·IN·ARGENTINA

tomas n santos

Roy Behrens

The boy glimpses a dark form hurtling high over the tennis net and instinctively he leaps up bringing his racket back. A dull thud sounds across the courts as gray and white feathers spray into the air. Momentarily the boy pauses to slap his racket strings free of tiny feathers then continues to retrieve the balls lofted up by the machine opposite him. By the end of each practice session, two or three birds would have fallen on the other side of the net. Not that it matters, for starlings abound in Argentina.

As the boy's coach, I am pleased by his show of reflexes and brute instinct. Killing grace: this is what I look for in every boy I coach. And I have worked with the best. I taught Rafael Osuna the virtues of a solid net game. I helped Manolo Santana develop a devastating topspin lob. Guillermo Vilas owes his ground game to me. Of course, Guillermo has recently found another coach, the very capable Ion Tiriac of Rumania. But whenever I hear news of Guillermo's failures—as when he lost to Panatta in the finals of the Italian Open—I cannot help but feel that he is abandoning the basic philosophy of the game. It is simply this: first you should want to kill; and then you should want to kill with grace.

On my sixty-fifth birthday Isabel Perón honored me with a Distinguished Coaches Pension. Such awards are not given in other countries. But in Argentina, where people recognize the value of the game, it is only appropriate. One of my friends—Miguel Solti, the chess coach—is also a distinguished recipient of the pension. Now and again, especially when I feel out of touch with the reality of the Game and acutely feel the world's transience, Miguel Solti would invariably ring me on the telephone (I think he is a born telepath) and he would come to my apartments on the Calle del Sol or I would go to his place and we would play chess for days in a row. This would re-establish my connection with the Game. I would subsequently march to the tennis courts near my apartments and take up my coaching with a finer intensity.

The boy I'm presently working with, my little killer of starlings, is Pedro Maria Escondido of Valparaiso. He is the son of Doña Carmen Maria Escondido, a woman formerly of Moriones, a small village in the pampas. My friends have twitted me about taking on Pedro Maria because of my previous acquaintance with his mother. The accusations are false for I had nothing absolutely to do with Carmen. She was merely a slut who wormed her way into the affections of the wealthy Alfonso Escondido. In 1949, before the second *coup*, we both worked for the Sevilla Tennis Club outside Buenos Aires. She tended the Club store (tennis balls imported from England were

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then selling at ten pesos a can) and I was a young ball-coach. Alfonso was the worst player at the Club. The trainers would watch frustrated as he stood, catatonic, taking up court space while the balls bounced all around him. He did break out of his stupor once, and this was to hurl his racket like a spear into the net. Then in a frenzy he kicked up the red clay-dust until he gagged. I followed him into the locker room. Slumped on a bench, the red dust caked on his neck and arms, he sighed.

"I want to do something better than this," he said.

"Like what," I said.

He sneezed four or five times. "I want a woman."

"That's easy. Try Carmen."

There are certain things a good coach can only guess at and it seems my hunch proved well for Alfonso. On my way home from work later that week I heard the sound of Carmen's laughter and the unmistakable sneezing of Alfonso coming from beneath the north grandstands. The affair continued from there, I suppose, and fortunately for Carmen, Escondido was crazy enough to run off with her to Valparaiso, where they lived in the household of his uncle Graciano, a wealthy profligate. I do not really know how the Escondidos ever consented to Alfonso's marrying the girl. As for me, I never went after girls like Carmen. My noble sense told me that I should woo courteously. It is this noble sense I have that allows me to instill grace into the most ruthless of players. Taming Delmar Torrijos (Argentinian champion, 1956) was no easy matter. Delmar smashed the ball not into the corners but at his opponents. Since I was his coach, this reflected badly on me. After he mauled the number two player from Chile in the deciding match of the Davis Cup regionals in 1955, I received a bill from a Chilean hospital charging me for costs to treat a fractured tibia. I sat with Delmar every afternoon in the summer of 1955; we sat sipping Madeira wine on the balcony of the Cafe Soltero overlooking the South Atlantic. I told him about the decent and noble life, of serenading lovely women, and of telling enchanting stories, by candlelight, to a loved one. Delmar was a huge man, of Indian lineage, whose Guajiro ancestors intermarried with the llaneros and were, much later, attracted by the glamor of the city. It was difficult to communicate nobility to him but I persisted until at one point—and I think it was when I mentioned my dream of riding the cobbled streets of Aruba in an open carriage and alighting by a shimmering tennis court made of finely ground seashells—he began to cry. From then on, he aimed for the corners.

Mysterious. The inner chemistry that produced Delmar's tears was finally a mystery to me; but you might say I evoked it, I somehow made the inner chemistry work. When Doña Carmen Escondido appeared at my apartments over a year ago, leading her son by the hand, it was her story about Pedro Maria that first interested me. The boy, she said, was born with an ovarian sac around his right arm. The arm itself seemed healthy but for the sac, a filmy purplish membrane that slipped off the arm when he was no more than two days old. The Basques who lived near their hacienda in Valparaiso said that the sac was a good omen: the boy would be a great *pelotero* or even a great writer. "I supposed that anything the boy took up—whether jai-alai, or polo, or anything that involved his right arm—he would excel at," she said. "I bring him to you simply to insure that fate." I was touched by her approach. I remembered her as the club shopgirl who never understood how the price of tennis balls was regulated by the availability of rubber in Sumatra.

"Did he take up tennis on his own?"

"No. I encouraged him to take it up. We even got him the best teachers in Valparaiso. All along I had planned to bring him to you."

"But why tennis in the first place?" I asked.

"For the money."

"I'll have to watch him play first."

"Certainly," she said. And before I could offer them drinks, she walked about the apartments, peered curiously into closets, threw a fright into my cook Lardizabal, admired the bric-a-brac, and even asked me how much I paid for my ivory chess set. "A gift," I said, and she grunted indifferently.

"Diego, did you ever marry?" she asked.

"No," I said. "Almost did. But why do you ask?"

"I was just thinking how handsome you looked years ago back at the Club Sevilla." She was quite a coquette.

"And you, so beautiful," I said. Then I looked at Pedro Maria. "But if you would have me coach your son, you should tell me that I am just as handsome as I was then."

"You are," she said.

We laughed, probably for different reasons. We went outdoors to the clay courts nearby. Goncalves was there practicing for the Inter-America tournament. You've never heard of Raul Goncalves because, though he was fiery, he could never be great. You see, he was a cripple: he had only one arm. Although such coaches as Pancho Segura will tell you that you need two arms for stroking the backhand, I will give you the simplest reason why you need two arms in tennis: for balance. I asked Goncalves to play a set with Pedro Maria. At first the boy smiled shyly as Goncalves, serving, tucked the head of the racket under the stump of an arm and with his good hand threw the ball high, and as the ball left his fingertips he reached for the handle of the racket and its head swung free, released by the stump clip which flapped like a seal's flippers as he bent back and uncorked an ace. "Well hit," said the boy. But that was the best Goncalves would do against him for the rest of the set. The boy sensed the cripple's natural imbalance and moved him back and forth along the baseline before deftly dropping a soft one, short, just over the net and watching with malicious glee as Goncalves strained, stump flapping, to reach the ball. "The boy's a killer," I told Carmen. "I'll take him on as a pupil." I asked Carmen to spend the night at the apartments before she left for Valparaiso. "I've had guests stay at my place before," I said. "And as old as we are, no one will pay any attention."

That night, with Pedro Maria snoring softly in a far room, Carmen showed me the box which contained the boy's ovarian sac. It was a small rectangular box which may have at one time been a hand-tooled case for panatela cigars; the sac itself was less than a foot in length and resembled an enlarged and puffed up intestine. The sac was pliable enough to be folded and stored in the box.

"Keep the box near him at all times," Carmen said. "When he was a baby, he used to carry the sac with him everywhere—wouldn't ever be without it. As he grew older, we fastened it to a necklace which he wore all the time. One day, he went on a picnic with some friends but left the necklace behind. That afternoon one of his friends came to tell us they had rushed Pedro to a hospital. He was unconscious and was hardly breathing. For three days he remained comatose. Then his old nursemaid came to visit him at the hospital. She screamed when she saw he didn't have the necklace on. 'He will not recover until you return the sac to him,' she said. In a trice we had the sac hanging on the metal railing of the bed. We watched as Pedro's breathing grew stronger and he opened his eyes, sat up, and asked for a dish of *arroz Valenciana.*"

"He's in the other room now. Shouldn't we take the box back to him?"

"As long as the box is in the vicinity, it will be all right."

"Carmencita, why don't we simply tie the sac around his neck?"

"You are cruel, Diego."

"Cruel? I have not once in my life been accused of cruelty."

"Your face betrays you."

"My face is unreliable. I simply meant to ask why the sac is no longer part of some kind of necklace. Then nobody would have to worry."

"It was Pedro's decision. He thinks he has outgrown his dependence on the sac. Nevertheless, try to see to it that he carries it around with him in his flight bag."

"I still think we should tie it around his neck."

For a while we were silent. The view beyond the balcony showed few remaining lights in the city. She placed the box on a table and rose to turn off the lamp beside me. She knelt by my chair, moving closer. She wore dentures. She smelled of attar.

"At the Club Sevilla you must have thought badly of me," she said.

"You were everybody's girl at the Club Sevilla."

"I was never yours. Not that I regret anything I have ever done. But I have always wondered why you were such a serious man."

"Then as now?"

"Now you're different. Probably more skeptical of people and probably a little less patient. Am I wrong?"

"You left out the ulcers and the rheumatism."

She offered me her hands and I took them, kissing each lightly. "Diego, do you remember telling me about matadors fighting bulls by moonlight? Let's play tennis tonight, naked, by the enchanting moonlight."

"You're crazy, Carmencita. It is a happy thought, but not possible."

She held me by the shoulders; in her black lace dress smelling of attar she seemed twice as large as the Carmen I remembered. "Let's go," she said. "Let us not speak or dream. It's almost too late."

"There is no moon tonight," I said.

She grasped my hands and pulled me out of my chair. She touched her cheek to mine, tore away abruptly, then searched about madly for rackets and balls.

"In the closet by the door," I said.

The courts were deserted, the lights from nearby buildings were screened off by the trees. She coughed as we entered the gates. She unzipped her dress and slid out of it, exposing a tightly girdled torso. She urged me to take off my clothes as she wriggled out of her girdle and soon she was unrecognizable except as a splotch of whiteness on the other end of the court. As I stood naked, gripping the racket as I had done countless times while instructing a pupil, I felt a sudden chill accompanied by a rheumatic spasm in my shoulder. Carmen could not see what was wrong with me as she playfully lobbed one ball after another over the net. "Hit them back," she cried. I swung at one and missed. I thought: at any other time, any other time, but now with Carmen, middle-aged and reckless Carmen, it was too late. "Diego! Eyes on the ball." I stroked at one mechanically and connected. "Good shot. You're such a pro," she said. I saw the balls better and hit them all as gracefully as I could. Carmen started swinging recklessly at the ball and soon she stopped hitting and walked toward the net, coughing. "You have just won the match," she said leaning heavily over the net, "for which I deserve a victory embrace." I felt in awe of Carmen as I clasped her to me, her breasts warm, her back moist and cold. She kissed me and, smiling, began to put her clothes back on. Her hair was in disarray. We said nothing to each other on the way back to the apartments. I stopped by the sidewalk to shake the sand from my shoes.

This afternoon Pedro Maria has a match against a semi-professional from Bulgaria. Beside me is the box containing the sac which his mother left me. My friends have been telling me to dispose of the sac, claiming, and not without reason, that the whole business about the sac was utter superstition, or worse, that it was a shrewd fabulation on Carmen's part in order to remind the boy of his ties to her. Though the boy does not seem keenly aware of the box, he knows it is always near. Right now, besides returning everything that hurtles over the net, he is conscious of the girls sitting outside the gates watching him. The girls probably delight in watching him swat at low-flying birds. Deriving some inspiration from girls is legitimate—this is part of the romance of the game—but it is a different matter when a player is thoroughly taken in by them.

Last night Pedro Maria stayed out much later than usual. I had to reprimand him.

"Back trouble," I said. "Ninety percent of the doctors I know tell me that is what results from carnal over-indulgence. It saps the spinal energies."

"I respect your advice, señor, but please believe I was merely out with some friends and we spent the evening talking."

"Talking!"

"Yes señor, talking."

"You're back at three in the morning and you say you spent the night talking. You'd be hoarse by now—or maybe you couldn't shut your friends up. Young man, your lying is very insulting. If I show some concern over your habits, it is only because I am pursuing Carmen's ambitions for you."

"The money in the professional circuit."

"The prestige of a champion. The Escondido name."

"Only father thinks that."

"Your father would prove something through you."

"Father is a fool." He stood by the table lamp in his Italian-form paisley shirt, his flight bag hanging loosely from his shoulder. The slant of illumination that cut across his temple made me suddenly aware of his reddened ears. I shivered.

"If such is your attitude about your parents' expectations of you, I don't see why you should continue playing. Take the next plane to Valparaiso."

"Señor Ochoa, I play because I love the game. And I choose to remain under your tutelage because I like your philosophy of the game. Killing with kindness."

"No, with *grace*."

"I must learn that," he said. He walked toward his bedroom, unbuttoning his shirt and pulling the shirttails free.

After this morning's practice session, the girls will have lunch with us. One of them is particularly attracted to him, I do not know her name.

We dine picnic-style on a grassy hill just beyond the courts. The meal is light: broiled prawns and salads, expertly prepared by my cook Lardizabal. The girl munches at the prawns thoughtfully then turns a glance at Pedro Maria. The others chatter animatedly but the girl and Pedro cast looks at each other, volleying, across the table. I talk to them, but they do not hear my words. Feeling slighted, I pick up Pedro Maria's flight bag, remove the box from it, and walk back to the apartments. He sees I have the box, but does not follow.

At the apartments I try unsuccessfully to take a siesta. Lardizabal returns, but without Pedro Maria. I wonder why Miguel Solti has not stopped by to see me this week. At two-thirty I begin to dress, having at least to show myself to the Bulgarian before the match. I pause to stare at the box. Inwardly I smile, then I open it and take out the sac, dry to the touch like a lizard's skin, and hang it on a hook in one of the closets. I take the empty box with me.

The Bulgarian is doing calisthenics on courtside. Pedro Maria is not yet here. The Bulgarian picks up his tennis racket, unsheaths it, and swings at the air, the racket like a toy in his hand.

"Señor Diego Ochoa?"

"Yes?" I answer, looking around.

"I am the trainer from Bulgaria. I recognized you from photographs I have seen in the newspapers. I'm privileged to meet you."

"I'm equally privileged. Your boy almost beat Bjorn Borg for the European title last month."

"Yes, we were a little lucky. Borg has so much experience behind him."

"Your boy looks good. He moves like a panther."

"Thank you. Will Pedro Escondido be here soon? If not I'll hit a few with the boy."

"Do that," I tell him. "Pedro may not be along for a while."

The Bulgarian boy strokes the ball back and forth with his trainer. After ten minutes, I walk toward the trainer to offer my apologies for Pedro Maria's absence. As I begin to explain the problem to the trainer, girlish chatter erupts all around me. I turn and move toward the group—it is the same group we lunched with—and I ask them where Pedro is. "He's behind you," says one of the girls. I turn again and Pedro is already shaking hands with the Bulgarian. "Pedro!" I shout, but he ignores me and begins his warmup. The match begins with the Bulgarian serving first. As they rally I notice that Pedro is a trifle slow and I think feverishly whether Carmen's story about the sac is true. What if, on account of Carmen's dried up intestine, Pedro Maria fell into a numb stupor on the courts? The Bulgarian holds serve. Pedro falls behind on his serve 15-30 but pulls up even by slashing a backhand crosscourt, out of the Bulgar's reach. 30-all. The Bulgarian wins the next point when, after a topspin forehand, the ball hits the cord and spills onto Pedro's court. Break point. Pedro serves deep into the Bulgarian's backhand and the return is an arching lob which Pedro anticipates well. He decides to let it bounce before smashing it back, but it takes a curving bounce and in a split second he has to shift from the overhead to the forehand stance. The Bulgarian, sensing that the odd bounce has thrown Pedro slightly off balance, rushes the net. I think momentarily: surely a service break—unless the boy has the know-how to lob over the Bulgar's head. Pedro does not lob; and as the Bulgarian moves to put away the shot which Pedro has feebly returned, Pedro moves half-court and as the Bulgarian drives the ball hard, Pedro lunges forward meeting the ball midair and volleying it past his surprised opponent. Pedro subsequently holds service. He later takes the set and the Bulgarian trainer approaches me. "I'm surprised," he says. "Your boy is quite unorthodox; he doesn't seem to play according to the sagacious and crafty style of play his coach is known by. You are indeed surprising and brilliant, Señor Ochoa." As the set comes to a close, I take the box out of my pocket and I look in it again. The box is empty. Pedro is taking the match, playing as Guillermo Vilas did against the Czech champion on these same courts over five years ago.

After the match I shake hands with the players. The Bulgarian's lips are cracked and have begun to bleed, the saliva has dried at the corners of his mouth. Pedro is hardly perspiring. He moves off amid the cheers of his companions.

At the apartments I pace up and down, not knowing what to do. I look in the closets for the sac and I do not remember precisely where I hid it.

"Lardizabal! Have you seen a dried thing hanging in my closet today?"

"Yes, señor. It looked like a decayed sock," he laughs. "I threw it away. Oh, incidentally, Señor Solti tried to reach you this afternoon."

"Where is it?"

"What, señor?"

"Where is the decayed sock?"

"Downstairs in the trash bins."

I rush downstairs. The area near the cellarage smells of rotten vegetables and I hold my nose as I open each of the trash bins. In the last is something recognizable as a sac. I squint as I pick it up: there is a tennis ball inside it. ☐

JOHN JUDSON

TWO POEMS

4 December 76

for George Ellison

What is it that
keeps men
from one another,
that keeps
them lost in time,
but
the lack
of it.
Though I don't seek
Hahn Shan,
that delightful
old man
with the rocky name,
it comes
close to being
Chinese:
one cup
of coffee,
alone in
dark morning,
one pen.
After such a
psalm,
who needs
wine?

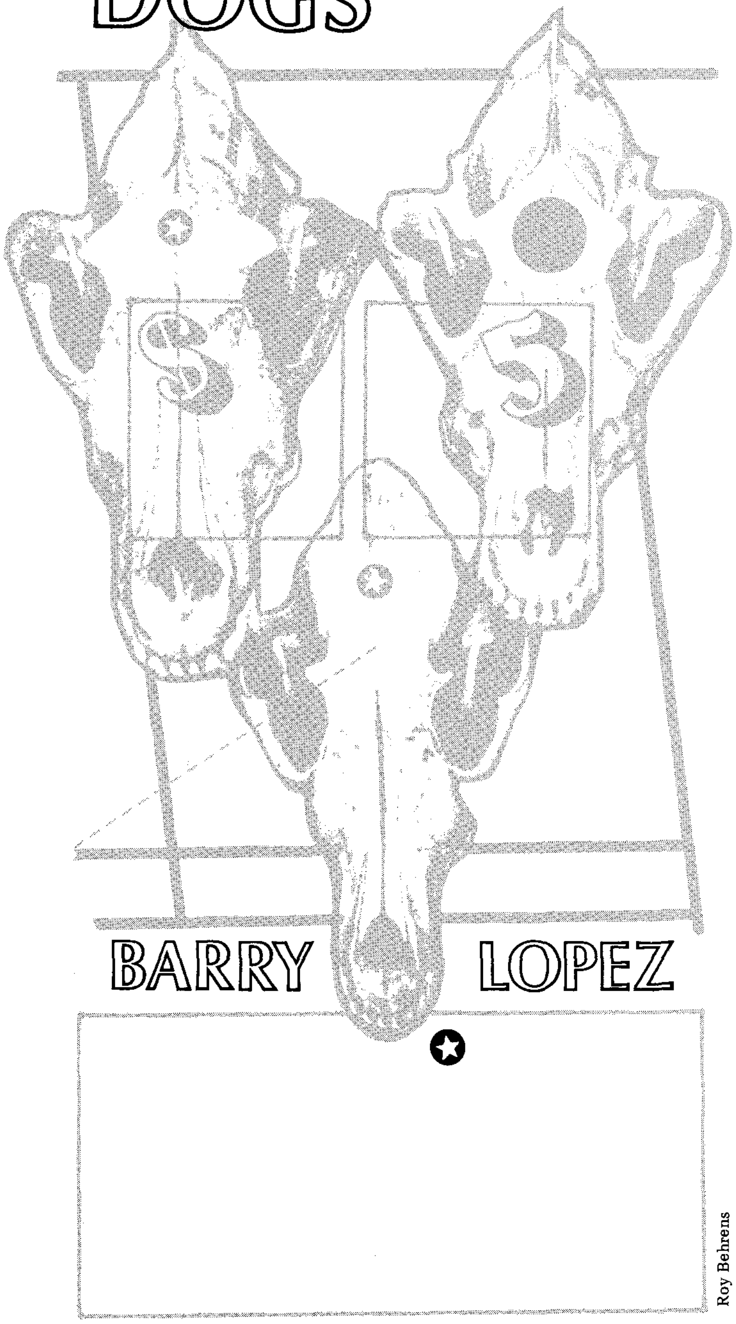
March 11, 1977

for Bill . . . Sweet William
(January 13, 1953–March 11, 1972)

I could write of poets,
of Auden the classical
homosexual destroying his
letters,
allowing nothing into the poems
which is not there;
of Thomas caught looking
through heavy glass
at the world,
seeing it turn
brown and hollow
as his bottle;
of Emily
hiding in white
from a dark fear,
singing hymns to Death
in a language
we carry New England in;
of Hopkins
sprung
to a dance with weeds,
his heart
taloned by light;
of Merton
who wanted Silence
and became
tomorrow's tongue;
of all the delusions
their wills lived by
and I am;
but today,
I speak of an irony
I took part in,
of blood
to which I brought
a dream's pollen,
of snow
and your mornings
on the mountain,
framed by what
each dawn
might see.
And of the tree
whose first root
foreordained you,
and of this page
which cannot
let you be.

DAVE'S STORY: FIVE DOLLAR DOGS

BARRY LOPEZ



Roy Behrens

I was up in the badlands in the twenties, all up in that country north of the Black Hills. I worked for wages when I was seventeen, eighteen, then mostly I was running coyotes. For the bounty. Had a wagon to carry the dogs and a team of horses and I rode alongside, going from ranch to ranch hiring out. I got eight dollars for every coyote the dogs killed and eight from the state, and if the dogs didn't tear it up I got three or four dollars for the hide. It was awful work. God, the dogs, you didn't want to turn your back on them. I quit it after two years, went up to Alaska to fish.

Those goddamn dogs, you couldn't control them. They'd get near a horse and they'd start to leap for his neck or his nuts. If they got you down they'd kill you. That's all they knew, to kill. They'd go after anything that ran, they didn't care. I got out ahead of them once and realized they had quit the coyote and were after the horse. When you caught up with them they'd have a coyote stretched out twelve inches off the ground, just shredding it. You'd have to club them off it.

Some of them could be gentle. Had a little dog, I can't remember, I think I called her Queenie, that used to ride with her head in my lap, curled up against my leg on the seat of the pickup. Greyhound. She was so timid. But when she got hold of an animal, oh my it was bad. She'd slit a coyote open and drive her head in up to her shoulders tearing his guts out.

When I started out I had names for them all, but then I got to where I'd just say "little dog" or "black dog." And I'd think of them as throat dogs or chest dogs when I looked at them. I wore these bullhide chaps they couldn't bite through and a horsehide jacket over a heavy sweater. They'd bite you in the ass.

I didn't know much about dogs when I started. I bought every dog I saw that looked like a hound and could run. I'd pay five dollars. Most of them were greyhounds, but I had a couple of Russian staghounds that were close to seventy pounds. Most of the time I kept 24. Some I had to kill, ones that fought all the time or wouldn't chase coyotes, only run after rabbits or something.

I carried them in wire cages, set down both sides of a platform on a Chevy truck frame, double row of six on each side. Had rubber tires. I fed them meat and bread. Horses were very plentiful in that country. You could take a ride and see 10,000 horses, so I shot horses for meat. And then I had a little hopper, a grain grinder, I set up at the ranches. I carried proso millet and mixed it with wheat and oats and barley from the ranches, maybe some corn. Then I'd sift the hell out of it through a window screen. They all had milk and I'd mix in salt, baking powder, sugar—I'd bake bread to beat hell with all my pans in one of those ranch stoves. Put it all in burlap bags and toss it on the wagon.

When I'd butcher a horse I'd throw the hide over the rig and let it freeze around the cages for insulation. The horsemeat I'd quarter and let freeze, then chop off what I wanted with an ax, get the marrow out of the bones. I'd give a dog a piece of meat that looked like it would fit between his last rib and his hip, that was how I judged. They got shiny, sleek and fat. I tried them poor first, I didn't know much about dogs when I started. When I got them fat they'd hurry up with me all day long.

I'd go up to a ranch and I'd have to leave my rig out of sight, ride up on a horse. I didn't bring dogs around a ranch. They'd kill any ranch dogs. God it was bad. They killed a lot of good cattle dogs. I could only let out four or five at a time during the day. Four was best. Still, if they went all day and had no scare they'd start to nip at the horse. I sharp shod him. He could kill one with a kick in the head. For small dogs—they weighed only about thirty pounds, thirty-five pounds—they were awful strong. Four of them could take a deer down and stretch it right out. I didn't like it, but there was no way to call them back.

That was flat country, most of it. I could let the horses graze still hitched up to the wagon, because there was no place steep enough for them to tip it over. A coyote might disappear in the brush, run behind a little hill, but the dogs would find him. You can't *train* a greyhound to do that because he doesn't hunt with his nose, he hunts by sight; if he loses sight of something it's just got to be in him to keep after it. A greyhound is either timid as hell or he's smelling blood, won't quit.

Those dogs communicated with each other when they were after something. If a coyote went into a draw they'd look at each other and then pair off. Two would come in over the top and one would come in from each side. The coyote would have nowhere to go. They could kill a coyote one on one. They didn't make a sound when they did it. The thing was completely silent.

They would fight among themselves though, Jesus they made an awful noise. I'd let them fight. It was good practice. But I carried a short piece of ashwood, about two and a half feet, and when one got the other down and was going to kill him I'd knock them both out. I didn't know how to stop dogs from fighting then. I found out if you put a rubber glove on and ran a finger up one's ass, boy, he'd let loose.

The worst for them was when they jumped a wolf. A wolf can't run as fast as a coyote so he'd go into a low place and turn around and just wait for the dogs to come over the top. The first time I saw it the wolf grabbed the first dog behind the shoulder and tore out a rib and the second dog by the back of the head and crushed his skull. I ran over the top of them on the horse and clubbed the wolf to death. The next time I got there ahead of them because I knew he was going to wreck some dogs.

I got the same eight dollars for a wolf from the ranchers and the state but a wolf hide sold as high as $28 up there because the fur was so thick on it. God that was terrible big money. Eighteen dollars was as high as I ever got, but by that time, 1927, 1928, the wolves were gone. And the coyotes weren't very thick. It was no bonanza working in that country, I'll tell you. If the ranchers hadn't given me grain and hay, it would have been awful hard. They fed me and sacked up grain for my horses. The dogs ate well—they'd never eat a coyote, you know, when they killed one. Nothing will eat a coyote.

It was bad weather up there in the winter when the pelts were prime. You were always wanting to hole up somewhere. It could go down to sixty below. When it's that cold you can hear a horse walking half a mile away. I collected lignite on the prairie for a fire. It was lying all around, just pile it up and put a match to it.

There weren't any German shepherds up there until right after World War I. They were like coyotes but built different. They were an entirely different dog from what you see today. People would get them as pups from California and when the dog was a year old it would just run off. Christ you'd see people looking for their dogs. The German shepherds would get into sheep pens and kill every one of them. They weren't afraid of human scents. The state wouldn't pay a bounty because they thought everybody would go out and shoot the neighbor's dog. But the stock association did, Ross Island Meat Packing Company paid eight dollars. The hide wasn't worth anything. It was a fad up there after the war, everyone got a German shepherd. God, they were worse than anything on stock.

I never got attached to those dogs but I remember some of them. The first two I bought were Russian staghounds, from the Indian agent at Standing Rock Reservation. It was during prohibition and he'd tried to train them to smell out liquor. I had a greyhound named Ben, was the fastest dog I ever saw. He could spot a coyote a half mile away and run him down before the coyote got a mile. I ran alongside him in a model A pickup one day to see how fast he would go. I had it wide open, almost fifty miles an hour, and Ben was running along looking up at me. I said, "All right Ben, get in."

That little dog Queenie, I wanted to breed her she was so fast, but she tore up animals to where the hide was worthless. When she'd catch up with a coyote she'd reach under his belly for the far leg, flip him over on his back and break it. She'd rip him open and bury her head in his guts up to her shoulders. She was awful that way. But timid. God, you'd yell at her and she'd cower.

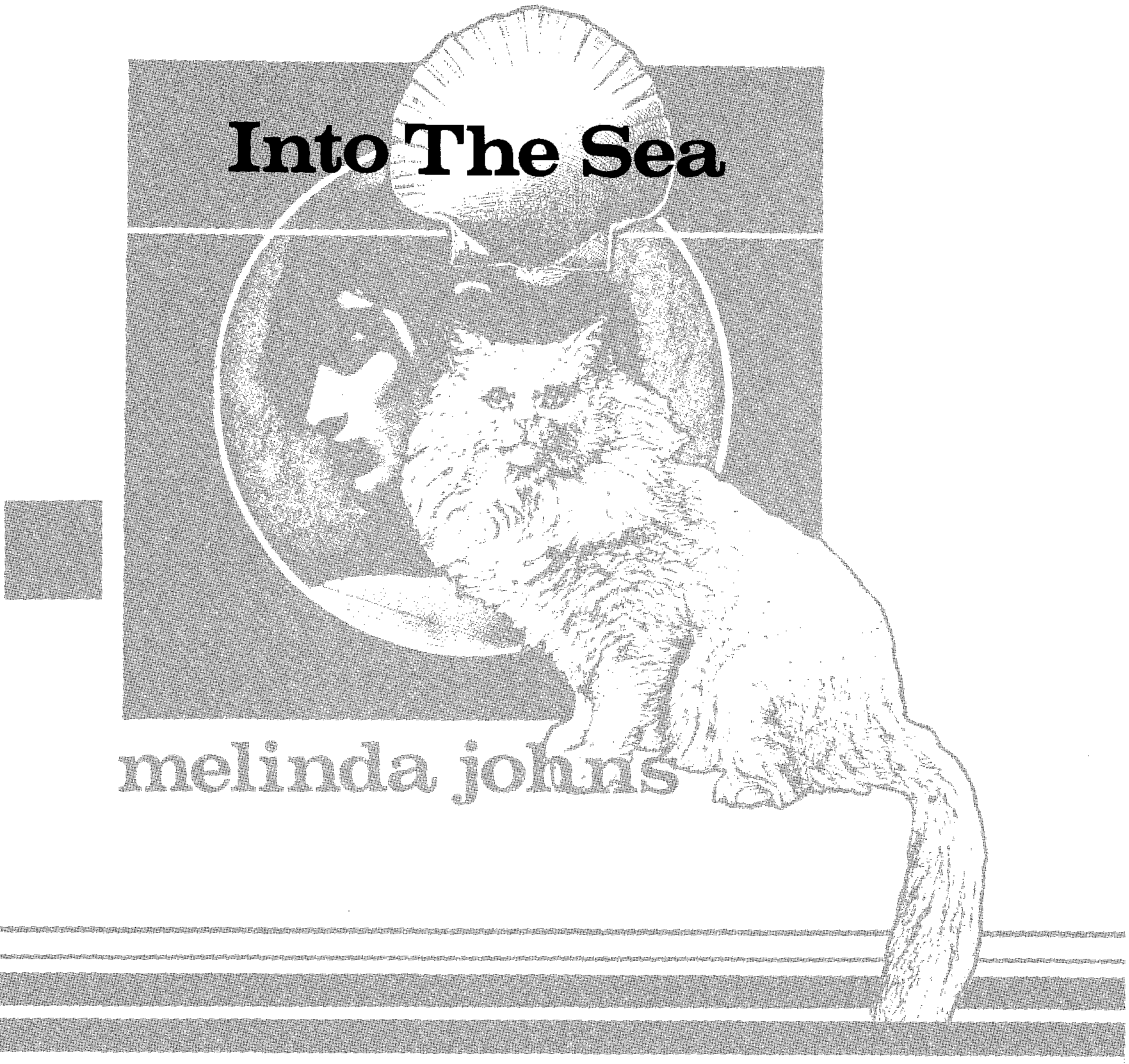
I bought a Russian staghound around Bismarck that was fast too but he wouldn't kill. He'd run up alongside a coyote and stare at him, drop back, come up on the other side, stare at him. By that time another dog would be on top of them.

I never had but a few trail hounds. When a coyote would get away in the grass the sight hounds would hold up but a trail hound would stay on it. The greyhounds would go sit on a knoll and wait, day and night—coyote is like any other animal, he has to come home sooner or later. But the trail hound would run to the end. I had a blue tick-redbone cross that used to run deer to death. One morning I found him lying in a cottonwood flat by a river in about an inch of snow, the hound and the deer not twenty feet from each other, exhausted. The deer never got up. The dog couldn't walk for a week. He got to chasing so many deer, one day I had to kill him. ☐

BARRY LOPEZ is the author of Of Wolves and Men *(Scribners).*

Into The Sea

melinda johns

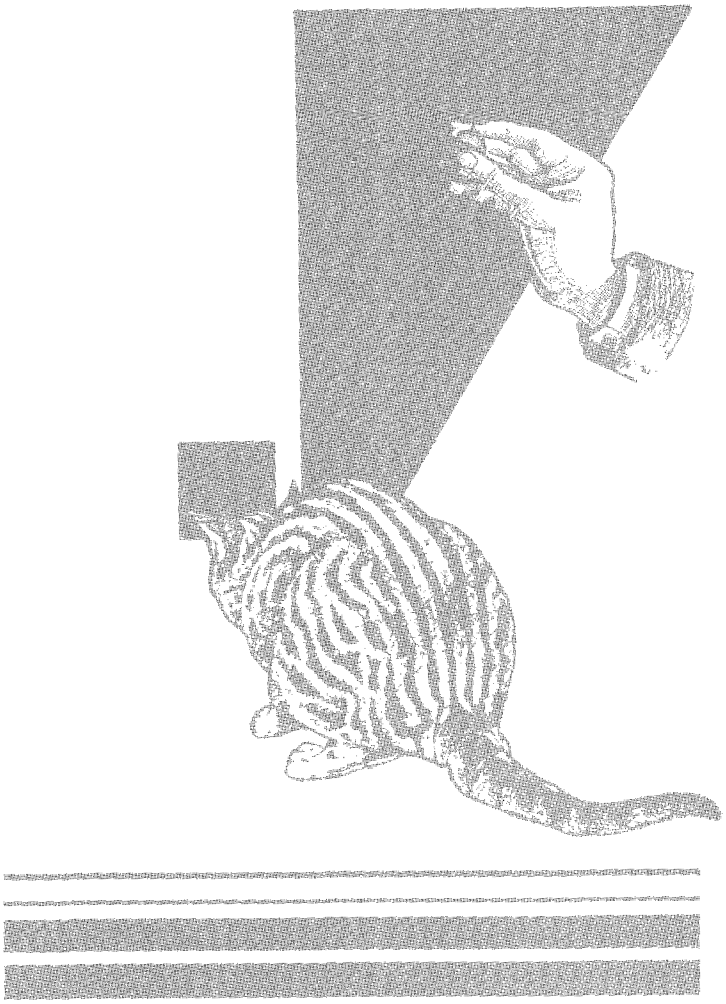


Roy Behrens

When I sit on the porch at night, I'm conscious of myself as a domestic tableau; me posed on the rocker under the reading lamp, Sophia curled on a cushion at my feet. Occasionally she will stare intently out into the night, ears forward, the pupils of her eyes large in excitement. I will look with fear in the direction that she is staring and continue to look long after she has buried her nose in her tail again. She will not sit in my lap anymore. It is because I rock too violently. I can't sit. I must plunge into the garden and circle there in furious revolutions, touching the tips of the blue spruce with my fingers, stepping on every other flagstone, if the moon is out to light the way. If it isn't, I avoid the flagstones. Sophia follows me on my rounds. Her tail curls about my legs. From the outside, the porch is a stage set; Ibsen, Chekov. Coy wickerware rockers, antique china lamps with drooping handpainted flowers on the shades. Ferns, decorator plants in judicious places. I enter stage left and rock again, my eyes on trees I cannot see.

Sherman is in Boston. On business. If he were here, he would occupy the other rocker, placidly turning the pages of his paper with fetal hands. Here or there, he remains a banality. Even he realizes this and he will purchase raquetball equipment or a novel by Proust to convince himself otherwise. We are a play with no dialogue. Since Katie ran away, we have nothing to talk about. No Communion through Adversity. While he is away, I am to be content with The New York Times, a host of literary magazines and the leatherbound library. I am to be curator to his collection of oiled and gleaming antiques and muffle the echoes of emptiness that ripple from room to room in his large house. I am not equal to the task. I cannot even read the magazines. I am lost in the print. I buy tabloids from the village drugstore and read while I'm walking. When I stop walking, I stop reading. I would have preferred to suffer the sort of breakdown, if there was one, that enabled me to read Great Classics, *Don Quixote* maybe, or *Ulysses*. It seems tidier, somehow, than this desire to witness another's passion and pain in boldface headlines.

At home, I wander from room to room, heading straight to the windows, looking out, seeing nothing. Sometimes I tap on the glass to assure myself that I am in prison. I never enter Katie's room. I think it is because I understand. And I don't want to anymore. This is what I understand. We are sociological statistics, we three: middle class parents, rebellious adolescent with no Significant Family Role. We hate each other, one at a time. The alliances shift dangerously. It is the oppression of seeing life as an inevitable cliché that keeps me from entering



Katie's room. I have lost touch with the heart of the matter. I am assuming, on faith, that there is one.

People do not visit here when Sherman is in Boston for the same reason that Sophia will not sit in my lap. I cannot sit. Guests must follow me while they talk. I will not slacken pace for casuistry and that is all that is offered me in my time of Loss. I loathe the company of human beings.

We, I, they live near the Cape Cod Bay. Evenings, I will wrap a scarf around my neck and stalk the beach, brine rich in my nose, horseshoe crabs like ancient trilobites scuttling into the surf. Sophia stops to investigate heaps of dried kelp, then gallops on slender brown paws to catch up. But the waves are tame and the lights across the Bay are like a tight string of beads on my throat. My head rears. I smell fall where fall ought not to be. It is the smell of fallen leaves, beneath a maple, early October. Only one sniff, like a summons. My ankles wobble as I wade through the sand to the road. I hurry through twilight streets to the house, the Siamese complaining behind me.

I find Katie's old sleeping bag in the basement. With it are her hiking boots, a size too big; they'll do. My jeans, old style, flannel shirt, ski jacket. I rummage the upstairs bathroom for a toothbrush and catch sight of myself in the mirror. No time to try and recognize myself nor set my face in irony. I do replace the toothbrush with a snort. What else? I look around my, our, his bedroom. The bedspread—Sherman calls it the Counterpane—lies on the floor, one corner tangled around the fourposter. I decide to leave it this way. It will distract Sherman from whatever he will feel when he finds me gone. He will stop to make the bed, both sides even, before he begins to make discreet inquiries. I pocket his Emergency Supply of money—he will check my jewelry box first and discount robbery. In the kitchen I find a few camping supplies, matches, pan, knife. I tie them in packets and hang them on my backpack. I will clatter like a tinker and I wriggle a little to make a noise. Exhilaration mounts. I can't control it. The cupboards offer nothing. I have not been in the habit of eating since Katie left. I take out a box of Triscuits and eat one in the anticipation of hunger. Food and water for Sophia. My feet trip over themselves and finally charge the door. And I'm off. I head East, my nose tingling as I thrust it into cool night. Sophia howls her rage at a window screen. Sorry Sophia, I yell. Sorreeee.

Falmouth is shut down for the night. The streets are deserted. Empty flowerpots on streetlights creak in the wind. Once the tourist season ends, there is no need to fill the flowerpots. The tourist season has ended except for those tourists who consider themselves natives and stay until the cold comes. The one bookstore is closed for the winter, a bleached copy of Byron's poems in the window. I leave the town behind and walk on the shoulder of the road in order to move fast. When I hear a car coming, I fade out of the headlights. My boots eat up the road. Uncontained, my toes spread out in the tips of the boots. The white dividing line on the highway moves faster than the speed of sound.

Houses look less pretentious as I leave Falmouth Proper and get closer to Mashpee. With the occupants under blankets for the night, the houses seem vacant and vulnerable, like sleepy women. An upturned tricycle in a driveway gives me the impression of a country deserted by its people in haste, like open jars of face paint left by a courtesan from ancient Crete fleeing a holocaust. House after house, still and static, like a frieze. I charge the highway.

A streak of white whips past my boots, stops ahead on the road and licks one paw casually. Sophia! She notices me. My, fancy meeting you here . . . Her hair shoots electric sparks as I stroke her. I tell her I'm not babysitting cats and she moves away disdainfully. Who's asking you to? We proceed and she follows erratically, sometimes ahead, sometimes behind.

As the dark begins to gray and fir trees loom into defined shapes, we approach Mashpee Village, still sleeping. Traffic lights blink green and red for the ghosts of tourists. A beauty parlor has purple fluorescent lights in the window under which sit rows of stiff African violets.

Katie and I and another woman . . . I think she was the wife of some executive Sherman was courting . . .

MELINDA JOHNS recently earned her M.F.A. from the University of Iowa. She lives presently in upstate New York.

were walking in Falmouth. Hair. We were talking of hair styles and ranking beauty parlors. Katie walked ahead, peering into shop windows. "Now, your daughter's hair, that bleaching has made it brittle and strippy."

"Yes," I agreed.

"You really ought to make her do something about it."

Katie looked at me.

"Yes," I said, "these kids," I said, "I really must make her."

"You said you liked it." Katie stopped in the middle of the sidewalk. She screamed at me, her hands reaching out like a dance exercise. "You said you liked it."

> In Front of Other People. Who gave her the right? Does one own these things? Rights. I cannot forgive her this self-discovery. I wanted to give it to her.

Sunrise. Pockets of mist settle in the lower parts of the cranberry bogs on both sides of the road. The red of the oak shows purple. A dog, chained to a clothesline, stretches, his haunches high. He sees Sophia and yaps. She ignores him. I feel the touch of warmth on my forehead and chest. I stop at a diner. Eggs, bacon, hash browns, coffee. Side order of sausage. I stare out the window so the waiter won't talk to me. I am ravenous and eat fast. I can't linger over a refill. Not here. I wrap the sausage in a napkin, ask for a papercup full of water, and slide off the stool. Paid, pack on, I rouse a snoozing Sophia and enter woods off the road. In a patch of sunshine and a bed of leaves, I give Sophia the sausage and water, and lie down to watch her eat it. She yawns, picks at it. While she picks, I plummet into sleep, my face in the sun. Distantly, I feel Sophia curl in the crook of my leg.

We tramp through Barnstable. What impelled me from my home is now a steady urge. With the impetus gone, I feel the pain in my calves, the taut red-hot wire of anxiety coiling in my chest. Sophia complains that her paws hurt and I ride her on my back, on top of the rolled sleeping bag. Traffic is heavy and we stay well off the road. Sophia hates cars. In the distance I spot two hitchhikers and I run clumsily forward to get a better look. My heart patters painfully. They remind me of Katie. Katie and her friends. Hungry Lolitas, raggy jeans dragging in the dirt, tiny nipples thrust against army-navy teeshirts. Thin, brown stringy hair. Brazen and wild, like barn tabbys. And their eyes—critical, calculating, humorless—that pitiless glare of the half dead or the not yet aware. It made me weak, that look. I was exposed and foolish. They would congregate in Katie's room, these nubile babies, and play the stereo and smoke, exhaling out the window so I wouldn't know. They'd spend the night, packed in the bed, giggling, shrieking into the pillow. Together, they painted her walls black. Coming home late at night, I could smell the sweet meadow-weed odor of pot. Pot had been one of Sherman's desperate enthusiasms. I protested to Kate when I felt I was supposed to, but I was oppressed by her smouldering face. Weened and wed to books, I knew all about the Generation Gap but I was overwhelmed by the murder in her eyes. What did she see in mine? I withdrew to my room, she to her peers. It happens all the time. It is the Nature of Life.

I am visited, as I walk, with flashes of a sadness so pure that it must be a distillation. Essence of Futility. I can dab it behind my ears or make sachets. The Real Thing. Demon hands play on the cords in my throat. It is a sweet despair, the kind of seductive lure that whispers impotence and inevitability. Leave it, it breathes. Relinquish. I stop and lift my face as to a lover, but it passes and I step tentatively forward into the arms of that familiar pugnacious drive toward movement.

I buy groceries in Yarmouth. Sophia lets out a sleepy demand from the folds of the sleeping bag. She has aplomb. I tell her that cat food is out of the question. We're roughing it. Not me, she says. I'm royalty. I buy cat food and a can opener and give her a disgusted look which fails since I can't turn my head around far enough. The grocery clerk takes the look personally and turns sullen. Middleaged hippies, he mumbles to himself. I clank my money on the counter fiercely. It feels good. So good I steal a bottle of aspirin on the way out.

"Shoplifting? She was arrested for shoplifting?"

"A ceramic horse."

"A ceramic horse?"

"Sherman, would you stop repeating everything I say and deal with it."

"She ruins our reputation for a knicknack?"

"That's the general idea."

"I'm sick of your irony. How could you allow this?"

"I hope that question is rhetorical."

"Your retreats into cleverness are tiresome. You've nothing else to do except be a mother and you can't even do that."

"How easily we fall into a sterotype. We're not real, the two of us. We're a parody. Don't you see that?"

I leave the road and angle towards the ocean. Seagulls scream and fight over carrion that the tide carries away. Low tide. I walk on the wet sand. Sophia pads fastidiously above the surf line. The sun sets behind us, barely noticed. Below a dune I start a fire in a cavity in the sand and flop beside it, curling my shoulder muscles in an exhaustion complete and blissful. The ocean turns from green to blue to black and stars are there, suddenly. I roast hot dogs and a potato and open a can for visiting royalty. She eats and takes a long bath, paying particular attention to her paws, stretching her toes apart and licking in between with a raspy tongue. I wash my face in the surf and crawl into my bag, close to the dying embers of my fire.

We stick to the beaches through Dennis and Harwich. I take off the hiking boots and hang them about my neck. Sophia follows on the crest of the dunes, stopping to sniff a clump of sea grass when she catches me watching her.

We pass isolated groups of people; athletic, bronzed families with deck sneakers and fashionably faded denims. I pass two little boys fishing. They bite off the heads of many-legged clam worms and bait their hooks, spitting the heads to the gulls. A couple lies together, their bodies under a blanket, arms around each other's necks. I avert my eyes.

I heard Katie's muffled scream from the toolshed. Once, the shed was her dollhouse, but it collected lawn mowers, potting tools, bags of fertilizer, over the years. I approached hesitantly. Two naked heels were propped against the paneless window. The back of a man's head appeared between them. I retreated to the sound of private moans. Another panting scream ushered me in the porch door.

> The bitch the harlot she enjoyed it the strumpet the prostitute I hate her the rutting whore I wish I had one the cunt just once the wanton tart I wish I was her—

I find a sealed bottle snarled in kelp. There is a dry piece of paper inside. I kneel and carefully pry the wax off the top. Shakily, I pull out the message. It says, Whoever finds this, please mail it back to me, noting the place where it is found and the date. I enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope. Jeffrey Drum, Engleside, New Jersey. I hold the message in my hands for awhile, then I consign it to the waves. Jeffrey expects a message from Proteus with a minimum of effort and imagination. I wanted a Significant Answer. A line of poetry. A *Dear* to whom it may concern.

Nightfall on an Orleans beach. I follow the white curl of the surf. It turns into sound as I plod, sunk in myself. No moon. I snap as the water flows over my feet. I turn to the beach, the water curls around my ankles, my calves. I turn the other way. The undertow sucks at the pits of my knees. I stop. A black universe of sound, waves cracking against a beach. No direction. Limitless loss. High in the thin air I catch a cry. A baby cry. I follow it, not because I want a lifeline, but because it is the only thing to pursue. I have always been game. I will follow what is given. The cry is anguished. The water recedes. My jeans cling to frozen legs. I stumble up the beach. The cry is a yowl, the scream of the Siamese. She leaps into my arms and I bury my nose in her fur. So much for the Transcendental.

We leave the ocean at Wellfleet. I need supplies. The village is quaint and quiet. Saltbox houses with ocean faded shingle exteriors, a smooth silver gray. Lavender glass doorknobs. We meander and lean across a tiny bridge that spans the tideflats. The tide is ebbing. Thousands, millions of tiny crabs hurry sideways in and out of holes in the mud. The sea floor is alive with the swarm.

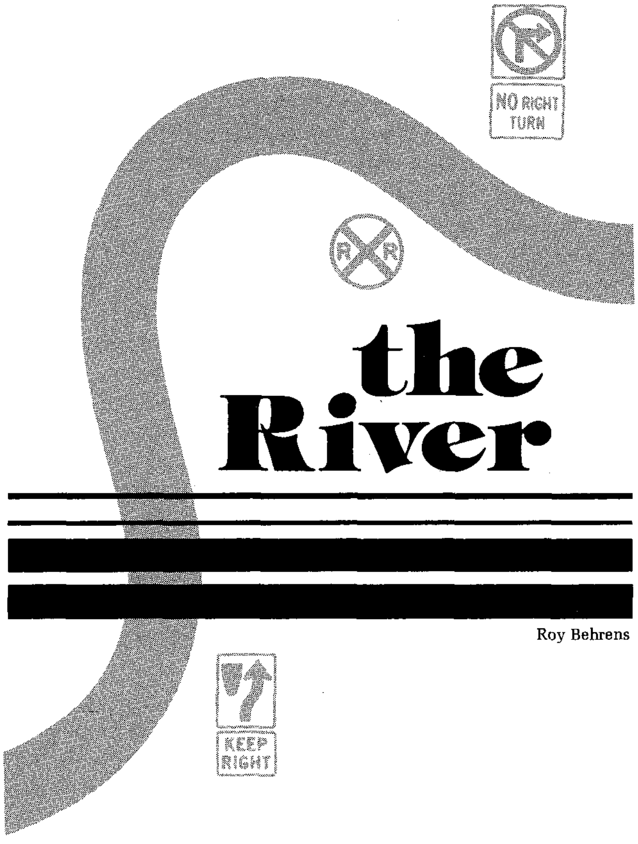
We follow the back roads through Truro. I stop at the fringe of a wooded lake. My hair is stiff and wild with salt, my clothes heavy with sand. I undress and wade into fresh water, dive beneath the surface, emerge with a splash and hoot that disturbs the flock of gulls floating like a cloud-puff in the center of the lake. Sophia fusses. I return to shore and rub her vigorously. Her fur is dull with salt.

We wander on trails through the woods. I am euphoric with exhaustion, light and giddy. I hear cars on the highway through the trees. We're stopped by a makeshift fence, a rope stuck on metal pegs. In the forest gloom I see heaps of dirt, yawning holes. In the crash of a cymbal, a few yearning notes of a symphony, I remember the incident. This is the scene of the burial. Six young girls, hitchhikers, murdered, entombed in Truro. One at a time? In pairs? Is there one whose grave they didn't find? My Katie, crucified and crumpled, mouldering underground? I sink to my knees in her terror. No longer does Katie appear to me as a baby, a clinging, suckling part of myself, or an organism under a microscope to be fed and guarded like a voracious cancer cell. On the lip of a grave I give birth to a Kate that is whole, separate, free and Other.

Later, I will muddy apocalypse with abstractions. I won't let life be as simple as letting go. But as I stand and flex my feet for walking, I notice a warmth somewhere, as if I might sing a snatch of something, or laugh, if given the chance. I never realized that guilt could be so cold.

I've lost count of the days I've been On the Road. I'm walking now because of the caress of the sun on my face, the crash of the waves, sea smells. Terns threaten to crack my skull if I come one step closer to their nests in the beach grass. The ocean is on both sides of the highway now, crushing the dunes into mighty imitations of the Kalahari. Provincetown is the fist of the Cape, a curiously gaudy and harmless fist-town, perched on the tip of a landscape that is pounded and blown on all sides by Ocean. Race Point, beyond the curlicued, picketfenced town is as far as I can go. I can go no further. Winds tear at my hair. Waves rip chunks from the sand at my feet. The ocean reclaims what it once possessed. And there, at the end, I relinquish what I never owned. She is my gift to the stream.

I lie on the sand, my hand on Sophia's fur, and rest. Surely I must have know that I'd come to an end of my journey. But it would have made me angry, then, to think about it. I'm not angry. I'm not new. I'm not changed. I'm not thawed. But I now have something else to do besides stand and rail at the ocean because I can go no further. Sophia's tail switches in irritation. She turns crazy blue eyes to mine and complains. She is sick to death of sand between her toes. She starts walking back to town, stopping to look back at me. Come on. There's nothing here. Let's go. I shoulder my pack and follow her. There will be a phone in town. I'll put in the first inquiries. I'm going to find Kate and tell her that she can be herself. She doesn't have to be me. I have a feeling I might now enjoy her company. Oh God . . . change is so hard. If I squared my shoulders anymore than they are, I'd be a clothespin. Sophia's black tail curls skywards like a wisp of camp-smoke. She knows I'm behind her. She won't look back again. □



Roy Behrens

the River

siv cedering fox

If you start where the mouth of the river opens into the Bay of Bothnia, you will be in the town of Kalix, Latin for Chalice, sometimes called Nederkalix, lower Kalix, as compared to Over Kalix, upper Kalix. The river runs smoothly here. It is good to walk up a river. Easier to go down, by boat or canoe, but better to go up. Do you have a map? Vitvattnet means The White Water. You can get good fish there. Mor means mother. Järv is Finnish for 'lake'. You will pass Morjärv. Between Morjärv and Svartbyn there are some cascades. They are not as wild as they used to be; they were dynamited so that the river would not flood Overkalix in the spring, making the town into an island. When it did, we had to go to school by row boat. The cascades, Räktfors, are still too wild for a boat, but you could walk up the West side of the river. Perhaps someone can give you a hand with the boat, and you can rest a while. When you get to Svartbyn, Black Village, you should get over to the East side of the river. It is most beautiful, and Lapp Mountain, on the West side, gives too much shade. The magic starts just south of Svartbyn. Walk slowly. If you go by boat, the current will help you keep the right speed. There is an island in the river. When the flood took our boat, one spring, that's where we found it. If you are walking and your shoes are worn, see if someone will row you across the river to the deafmute's house. He speaks in gestures and is skilled when it comes to fixing heel and sole. Seven kilometers of pine woods stretch between Svartbyn and Grelsbyn. Grelsbyn is not on the map, but you will recognize it from my descriptions. I was born there.

When I learned to spell, I liked to figure out the meaning of names. New Village. Black Village. East mountain. But there were two names that I could not understand, the name of the river Kalix and Grelsbyn, Grels Village. It was not until I was 31 years old that I learned the meaning of Kalix. In a dream a large book opened. The book said that Kalix is the Latin word for Chalice. There was a bright light around the book, leatherbound, gold lettered. When I woke up and looked into the encyclopedia, the word that I, as beginning reader, had thought foreign because of its X, was there, Kalix, Latin for Chalice, just as the dream had shown. But what about Grelsbyn? Is it Grail's village, the village of the grail? To continue. There are three islands in the river outside Grelsbyn. One is named Fårholmen, Sheep Island, must have been sheep there once. It is a long, narrow, grass covered island, inhabited mostly by swallows. A few hay barns stand in a row. On the North end, Sheep Island sticks a long tongue of red sand up river. It was there that pappa taught me to listen, to lie down on the sand, close my eyes and listen. You can swim to Sheep Island. I have done it. It is tough swimming. One must swim upstream all the time, while swimming across, fighting the current. Southwest of Sheep Island, there is an island, Starrholmen, where only lily-of-the-valley and

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wild black choke-cherry trees grow. We used to go there once a year to pick lily-of-the-valley. Maybe I told you how the farmer who owned this island burned it again and again, so that grass would grow, but only lily-of-the-valley grew. The wild black choke-cherry trees bloom at the same time. They too have small white fragrant flowers. The third island is Storsanden, The Big Sand. I read somewhere that there is always one place where children can cross a river. Well, Storsanden was that place, not too far from shore. In mid and late summer, one can wade to Storsanden. It is a round island of red sand. A few pussy willows grow in its center. When you follow the shore across from Storsanden, you will see many dragonflies. We used to cover our ears with our hands, when we walked there, because we believed that the dragonflies wanted to get into our ears, to eat the wax and bewitch us.

Walk slowly through Grelsbyn. The first red house, with white corners and green and white trim, is Christina's. I think she is still living. That's where I used to get milk. The grey house is the one I would like to fix up, to live in, some summer. The light green house is grandfather's and his father's before that . . . for hundreds of years it has been in the family. Kells. The light house on the hill is the house my father built for my mother when they were engaged. Then Klara's, a red house. Klara Christa dressed up as a ghost one night, to try to scare us. A white sheet over her head and a candle in her mouth. Then Klara Fina's house. She had many children, the youngest a pair of identical twins. Her husband has been in an asylum, as far back as I remember. The reason he was put away, the only reason I ever knew, was that he used to play the violin. All the time, the violin. Then Innaberg's, "in the mountain," where a girl died of tuberculosis. In the patch of woods, between Innaberg and the next house, there is the large birch tree I once claimed as my own. I would climb it, sit on a branch, make poems, tell secrets to the one friend who was allowed to enter that privacy. I thought that tree was my discovery, but then I found out that my father had it as his when he was small; so did my grandfather. You can climb it. Then Smess, which must have been a smithy once, according to its name. Three old bachelors are living there now. Old Fred tried to coax me up into the upper floor of the storage house, once, but I was ten and knew his reason. I didn't go. That's about it. Grelsbyn. Six homesteads, four not so old ones (three generations or four) and then a few newer houses like the one my father built for my mother.

When you pass Smess, you have to make a choice: turn right and follow the inlet, a bay off the river, around to Overkalix, or you can cross a small wooden bridge and follow the lowland to the town. The second is a better choice, I think. The grass is so beautiful there.

And then you are in Overkalix. You will know it by the church. Overkalix is really a county, and this town is the church town, the center of that county. We always call the town Bränna, The Burning, but the maps don't say that. Church after church burned down. The one before the present one burned the night I was born.

The river curves around Bränna, making it a peninsula, so you must cross the river, in order to continue, otherwise you will have to follow the lowlands and cross an inlet to an enormous lake . . . or go around that lake, but that would take you many additional days, or weeks, if you are walking.

So cross the river, follow the river on the West side for a while. Then go back to the East side before you get to Jokk. Jokk is a large waterfall, the name is Finnish and means just that, *waterfall*. In the spring the salmon can be seen jumping up Jokk. Some time in the 19th century, when there was war with Russia and the Russians came to Northern Sweden, some soldiers asked one of the local farmers to tell them how to get to the church village. They wanted the church treasure. The farmer told them to get into his boat, he would take them there. He started rowing them down river, above Jokk, ignoring the fact of the waterfall. When the Russians realized what was up, it was too late. Just before the boat capsized, the farmer jumped off onto a rock that still stands in the middle of the falls. All the Russians drowned.

Continue. I don't know the country too well further north, but I would like to travel it. The names are strange, some in Finnish, some in Lapp, occasionally some in Swedish. Did I tell you the word for river is "älv"? "Alva" is elf, it is the same word, really. Kebnekajse is the highest mountain in Sweden. That's where the Kalix begins. I want to go there.

I am writing to you, but it is I who must go there. Maybe we could go together. I know the languages spoken in Kalix and Overkalix. I know the currents. My sister almost drowned in that river. My brother almost drowned in that river. I learned to swim in that river.

I would like to know how other people can divorce themselves from a landscape. I am inseparable from that river. The stones and my nipples are related. Seagrass and my hair. Just as the water carried me when I, in my first conscious nakedness, floated downriver feeling the water, as an imaginary lover, touching me, so the water touched grandfather's horse as it swam behind the boat, I rowing, the large eyes of the horse rolling its fear of the water that would touch the horse to me. The logs that were cut in the forest and piled on the ice, to float down stream after the thawing, rolled and dunked me in the water when I tried to ride them, and scratched my thighs for all time to come. The river fed me pike and perch, yards of silver-scaled salmon, and it sent the loon to call me down in the spring. And when the images get too pretty, the mist rising over pink water, when my first love and I paddle Thor's canoe over the flooded island, paddle between the partly sunken pussy willows, on watery ways that the midnight sun had covered with gold, then the river breaks. It sucks my cousin down into the wild current by Starrholmen—to carry him downstream, forever. And, it calls me to go upstream, like the salmon, to startle the moose and the bear, to come to the place above the tree line, where the first drops of melted snow seep out of the black rock of Kebnekajse. Kebnekajse—the name sounds like the name of a half-crazed woman, who lifts her skirts to scare off the wild. ☐

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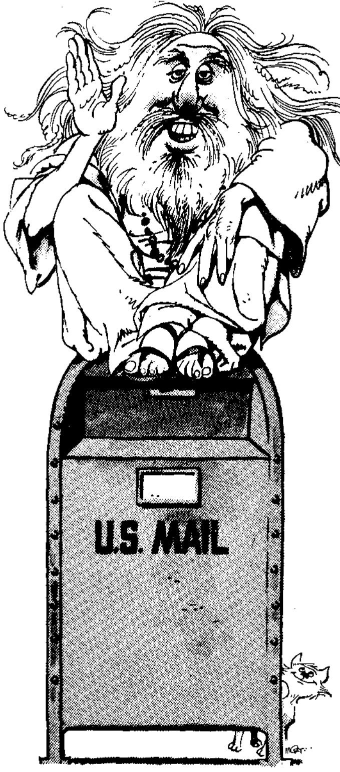

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THE LITERARY LIFE

COLD PASTORAL

Keats Revisited

Silence and slow time out of ancient seabeds, the sandstone heaved into red walls blackened with lichen and rain, stained with the guano of hawks and eagles. Along the canyon floor, clover and tall grasses, cattail, willows, milkweed and rabbit brush extend twin strips of meadow, classically peaceful, and between them flows the Escalante River under the clean blue of the sky. Water is drawn from that sky by the Aquarius Plateau, feeding plants that return year after year, fracturing the rock a little farther along its recurrent seams, in a cycle so timeless as to seem ceremonial. And equally timeless is a pattern in sand along the water's edge, where the pads of mountain lion and hoofprints of deer are enwound in graceful filigree.

What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape? asked Keats of the urn as we could of these tracks by the river. Is this the record of two animals that passed at separate times, sharing the canyon's lifeblood? Or is this evidence of mortal chase, a frozen moment before deer's narrow survival or lion's successful kill?

The figures of poised animation that haunted Keats were lovers and village celebrants, not predator and prey. Yet beneath the sweetness of tone and stateliness of language lies a similar motif. *What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?* The figures suggest men or gods in pursuit of *maidens loth,* and a lover *winning near the goal,* presumably over opposition. The moment of capture may be pleasurable to the vanquished as to the victor, but its accomplishment involves the flight of female from male, of mortal from deity, in the vocabulary of stalker and prey.

Finding that victory in love's chase leads to emotional death, *A burning forehead, and a parching tongue,* Keats turns to the lovers' village pursuing its own larger celebration. *Who are these coming to the sacrifice? To what green altar, O mysterious priest, Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies?* The villagers are commemorating death itself, giving it ritual significance precisely with the death of an animal. Their social, physical death formalizes private and emotional death. Are they reproducing mortality to subdue it? Are they trying to reconcile dying to the communal mind? Keats leaves us alone with the evidence: love pursued to the taste of ashes, society responding with death become ceremony.

* * *

The questions posed by the figures on the urn and the tracks in Escalante sand are convergent: What is the nature of a world that proceeds by hunter and quarry, by triumph indissoluble from death? For Keats, writing in 1819 on the first crest of the romantic wave, the terms of combat were new and less clearly defined. But already the celestial clockwork of the preceding century was giving way to a concept of life as competition and struggle. Coleridge was lecturing on evolution, and forty years later Darwin was to provide the mechanism by which it operates. Society became the struggle of individuals, the developing economy was industrial capitalism, and Delacroix was painting sulphurous canvases of lions attacking deer.

Our own vision a century and a half later, in the form of environmentalism, is largely an elaboration of that same vision. The recent sciences of ethology and ecology are showing us the principles of animal behavior and the process of interwoven life communities, while genetics and agricultural manipulation show us how to bend those principles to our presumed advantage. The great chain of being turns out to be a food chain, a pyramid of increasing predation of which humanity is the apex. And as Americans at the apex of human well-being, we preside over cattle shot full of hormones in the stupefaction of feedlots, and poultry multiplied in fluorescent catacombs: sentient life turned out on the assembly line. With feeling increasingly suspected in plants, even the vegetarian dodge looks unlike moral salvation. Our new knowledge, deflecting the biosphere toward our dinner table, has cost us our innocence about the predatory basis of earthly life. Yet all the latest disciplines and technologies have provided no answers; they have merely sharpened the questions. We are stuck with the motif of the chase: lover pursuing beloved, civilization engaged in ritual sacrifice, lion pursuing deer, mankind swallowing the earth. Stare at the trampled sand. *Thou silent form dost tease us out of thought As does eternity.*

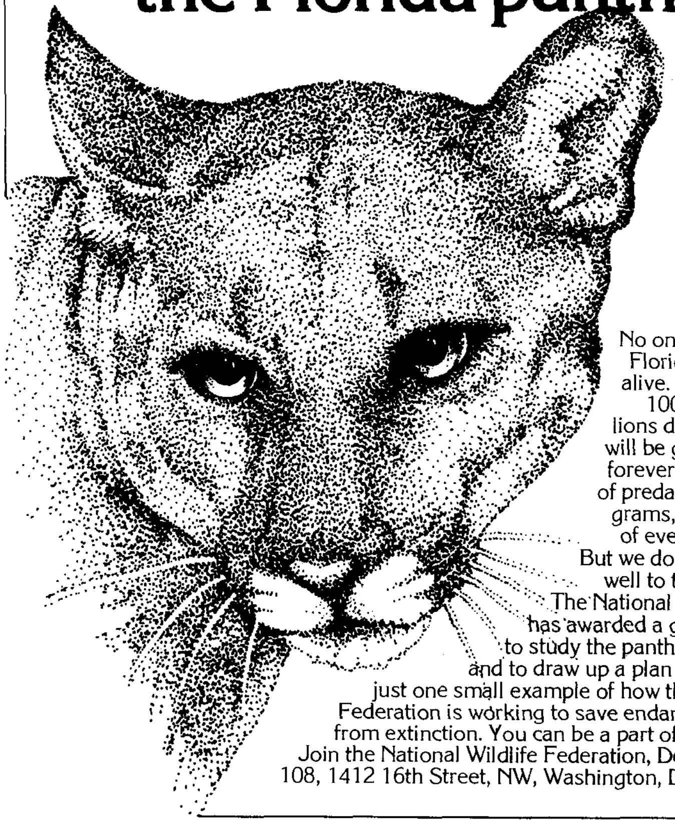
Cold pastoral! exclaims Keats, temporarily blanking at what has become too vast to encompass—and then proceeds to his resolution. And what he offers us is not explanation but extracted pattern, not celebrants and lovers but time frozen for inspection and revealing the shape of our lives. It is the hunt at its most telling moment: lovers on the brink of consummation, procession before ritual sacrifice. What survives of those moments is not participant but witness, not lovers and villages but their tracks in the sand: an urn. Individuals will come and go, as they have in the more than two millenia between the firing of the urn and the composition of the ode, and the century and a half between the ode and this year's tracks by the Escalante River—to which we add our own. The urn, because it makes satisfying pattern out of passing feelings, is beautiful, and because it is the structure of our lives, it is true. And indecipherable marks of pursuit and flight are true for us still. What must survive as friend to man, in silent testimonial, are stained rock, running stream, willow and cattail and rabbit brush, and a ribbon of sand with its decorative frieze of lion and deer. It is not for us to understand them; only to count on them.

–Bruce Berger

Children are a lot harder to mend.

Give to The Hospital For Sick Children Foundation,
555 University Avenue, Toronto M5G 1X8.

Farewell to the Florida panther.



No one knows how many Florida panthers are still alive. Perhaps fewer than 100. If these mountain lions die, another creature will be gone from the earth forever . . . the victim, first, of predator elimination programs, and more recently, of ever-shrinking habitat. But we don't have to bid farewell to the Florida panther. The National Wildlife Federation has awarded a grant to researchers to study the panther and its future . . . and to draw up a plan for saving it. That's just one small example of how the National Wildlife Federation is working to save endangered species from extinction. You can be a part of the effort. Join the National Wildlife Federation, Department 108, 1412 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

ISAK DINESEN & FEMINIST CRITICISM

"*The Monkey*," the third tale in *Seven Gothic Tales* by Isak Dinesen, begins in this way:

> In a few of the Lutheran countries of northern Europe there are still in existence places which make use of the name convent, and are governed by a prioress or chanoiness, although they are of no religious nature. They are retreats for unmarried ladies and widows of noble birth who here pass the autumn and winter days of their lives in a dignified and comfortable routine, according to the traditions of the houses. Many of these institutions are extremely wealthy, own great stretches of land and have had, during the centuries, inheritances and legacies bequested to them. A proud and kindly spirit of past feudal times seems to dwell in the stately buildings and to guide the existence of the communities.

What can we say about this prose? It is elegant. It is gracious. The reader is being treated to a noble and courteous tea. The host is slightly foreign; notice the position of his adverbs "who here pass" and "have had, during the centuries, inheritances . . ." The sentences are fairly long but logical in subordination of clauses and traditional in compounding of phrases.

Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who wrote the introduction to the first edition of *Seven Gothic Tales* and who was, in fact, responsible for getting them published in 1934, says of the style, herself, pondering: "Is it of Cervantes' leisurely, by-path-following style that it reminds me? Or perhaps just R.L. Stevenson's more mannered—no, no, it is more like a Romantic School German narrator's way of telling a story." And one hears Mrs. Fisher's own prose purring with excitement and appreciation of Dinesen's style. Mrs. Fisher didn't know that Dinesen wasn't a man. Thomas Dinesen, brother to Karen Blixen, had slipped Mrs. Fisher the manuscript and asked her to read it; he didn't say who wrote it.

Let us look at the next sentence of "*The Monkey*." It starts a new paragraph:

> The Virgin Prioress of Cloister Seven, under whose hands the convent prospered from the year 1818 to that of 1845, had a little gray monkey which had been given her by her cousin, Admiral von Schreckenstein, on his return from Zanzibar, and of which she was very fond.

That's a long sentence. It runs four and a third lines on a small page, but it's still long. Has it what Ellmann calls the "feminine mode"? Or the masculine mode? Is there much of what Ellmann would call "reason and knowledge" and not enough "feeling and intuition"? (Examine Mrs. Fisher's prose, for example.) Now even though this kind of distinction of reason prose vs. feeling prose belongs to the 19th century more than it does to the 20th, what marks Dinesen's prose is certainly its authority, based on reason and knowledge. It is even oracular. Even when the prose is most elegant, the pace is firm, direct, and confident. The lines move. And the story moves, even though the reader is not wholly certain of the direction in which he is being led. The sentence content is also masculine: geography, history, architecture, landscape. And the irony is bigger than God. Of all the creatures in the world, the Virgin Prioress has, for her pet, a monkey, would you believe? And like the most astute, efficient, remarkable, gloved maître d', the prose style continues past the monkey, to complete the elegant setting of the table. The monkey's antecedents are set forth . . . Zanzibar and an admiral with a name like Frankenstein, who gave the lady the little gray beast of whom she is now so fond, names like von Schreckenstein and Zanzibar assisting the element of surprise and double-take. Whose fare is this? A man's? A woman's? A neuter's?

Let us examine what happens in this story. The stripped events are these: The Virgin Prioress has a homosexual nephew, Boris von Schreckenstein, related to the admiral, no doubt, who is involved in a scandal; in order to prevent his disgrace at the exotic but Lutheran-dominated court, he needs must marry—a girl, preferably. He comes to his aunt, who is a fixer and a mixer of lives, and asks her advice and gets it. Aunt Cathinka will arrange something for her "*cher enfant*," Boris, with little Athena Hophallehus, who isn't little, who is, in fact, as huge as her name. The girl is a giant, inside and out, although she is hardly twenty. Athena doesn't want to get married, not to Boris, not to anyone. So Aunt Cathinka arranges for Boris to rape Athena, and Athena knocks out two of his front teeth. (It's a delicious scene.) Boris manages a full and bloody kiss on and in Athena's mouth (in order to prevent Athena from choking him to death, as much as anything else), and Athena faints. After the kiss. Aunt Cathinka now uses other methods of persuasion to bring these two lives together. These methods work, but at a terrible cost. For if Athena marries Boris, she will kill him. So she swears. And then. And then. And then. The Virgin Prioress turns into a monkey, her own gray monkey. Here is part of the metamorphosis in the story: "The old woman with whom they had been talking was, writhing and disheveled, forced to the floor: she was scrunched and changed. Where she had been, a monkey was now crouching and whining, altogether beaten, trying to take refuge in a corner of the room. And where the monkey had been jumping about, rose, a little out of breath from the effort, her face still a deep rose, the true Prioress of Cloister Seven."

The two young people now turn around and look into each other's faces. It is Athena's look that is significant. In this look, she lays down "a command which was not to be broken: from now, between, on the one side, her and him, who had been present together at the happenings of the last minutes, and, on the other side, the rest of the world, which had not been there, an insurmountable line would be forever drawn." And the Virgin Prioress sits down in her chair, mops her mouth daintily, and utters an apt Latin phrase, "*Discite justitiam et non temnere divos.*" (Obey the law and do not hold the gods in contempt.)

And that's what happens in the story, except that I haven't told the story. I have described a little of its action. I have left out the art and the vision and the sex. First of all "The Monkey" is a Gothic tale, on the surface, at any rate. It has a Gothic setting: convent and castle. It has a hero, tainted with perversion. It has an innocent maiden pursued by a sadistic old lady and an impotent young man. The sadistic old lady has a double, a monkey. The atmosphere is opulent, decadent, lush. There are opulent lines like:

> A sweet pudding was served to them, and the Prioress with a neat gourmandise, picked out a few of the cloves in it and ate them. "This is a very lovable smell and taste," she said, "and the fragrance of a clove grows unbelievably delightful in the midday sun or when the evening breeze fans the spiced currents of air over the land. Try a few of them. It is incense to the stomach."

And in addition to this richness there is terror:

From time to time the Virgin Prioress in addition to eating cloves will scratch herself daintily here and there with her pointed little finger. And all the while, along the avenues of Cloister Seven, a very small shadow runs across the road and hides in the shrubbery, and it is the monkey. The monkey is her "*geheimrat,*" her counselor, her secret sharer. When Boris returns to the convent after his meeting with the Count, Athena's father, Boris feels: "Strange powers were out tonight. The feeling was so strong and distinct that it was as if an ice-cold hand had passed for a moment over his scalp." This is a sample of the Gothic art.

Leonard Wolf, writing in the *New York Times Book Review,* says of Gothic novels, "that they were from the beginning composed of gentility endeavoring to control primordial fears." In this tale, however, we have no middle class ladies seeking to escape copulation with their brothers. We have giants and goddesses and a most assured aristocracy. What happens in "The Monkey" happens on Mt. Olympus or on Olympian landscapes. In this tale "fantasy predominates over reality, the strange takes precedence over the commonplace, the supernatural over nature, but not to scare, not to get to the body," as Ellen Moers in her review of Gothic novels suggests, "through its glands, epidermis and muscle, but rather to get to the soul and purge it more with pity and terror than with fear." "Gothic," says Moers, "has to do with fear." Dinesen's tales have more to do with fate than with fear. According to Eric Johannesson, "Dinesen's tales deal with individuals who are trapped in one way or another by sex, by class, by history. They deal with people who are imprisoned and long to be set free, to escape." So Athena, for example, doesn't want to marry. And Boris wants to remain a boy, a disengaged actor in life, and the Prioress wants to pull strings. Or let's state the case in this fashion. Athena wants to be a boy, Boris has played the part of a girl and the Prioress wants to be a man or a god. These are not the tensions and fears of the usual Gothic work.

Then why attach the name Gothic to these tales? For here, the Art cannot be separated from the Vision. "The Monkey" sends shivers up and down the reader's spine, but the shivers vanish once the reader understands that the tale has nothing to do with primordial fears of incest, homosexuality, animalism, cannibalism, torture of the young, rape of the innocent. The tale of "The Monkey" grows out of pain, much as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein grew out of "the anxieties of a woman who as daughter, mistress, mother, was the bearer of death." Dinesen, herself, as I will show in a brief biographical sketch, received a royal screwing from the almighty hand of fate such as few lady writers have been privileged to receive, but the compulsion to tell a story has other sources in Dinesen than the need to give visual form to fear or the compulsion to vomit up loathsome, lopsided visions of the self. There is certainly integration of fear and terror at the end of the tale, but not the usual "the maid goes free or the monster dies," those happy endings that we associate with the usual Gothic novel. Nor is there the bitter-sweet, with which we mourn the sad and sweet cripples of Carson McCullers' novels as they cry out against a fate that must punish them and us. There is another vision in these tales. It is a vision bigger than most men's . . . and women's.

Perhaps an examination of the sexual politics in this story can reveal the vision. Who runs the show? Who gives the orders in this tale of giants, goddesses, and homosexual noblemen? At first glance, the ladies are in charge. "The path of duty leads to happiness," says the Prioress when Boris comes to seek her help. She speaks to him "in the manner of a sibyl."

Then she loses herself in deep thought, and in these moments Boris can envision "her red parlor to be filled with young virgins of high birth . . . a muster roll of young femininity, who could hide no excellency or shortcomings." The Prioress sees all and knows all. Indeed she is "like an old connoisseur walking through his cellar," and Boris, who is able to follow her in thought, is "like the butler, who is holding the candle." And the Prioress, when she comes out of her thoughts, is capable of quick and dramatic action, because "she had amongst her ancestors great lords who had prepared campaigns with skill, but who had also had it in them to give over at the right moment to pure inspiration." Her inspiration comes to her as she is thinking about, "the planting and upkeep of forests . . . indeed among her greatest interests in life." And her inspiration is that Boris should marry the young maid Athena. (Athena is like a tree. She will have to be felled before other trees can grow, but the Prioress knows how to run a campaign and plant a forest.) Nonetheless, everybody takes orders from the Prioress. Even Athena's father, who stands "like Sampson when in his wrath he broke down the temple of the Philistines," "a striking figure, short in the legs and with the torso of a giant," who when he finishes reading the letter which the Prioress has written him on the subject of the marriage between Boris and Athena, says, "I feel you have been sent, Boris, by stronger hands than your own tonight." And stronger hands even than the Count's.

Athena, little Athena, "six feet high . . . with a pair of shoulders which could lift and carry a sack of wheat . . . at forty, she would be enormous," Athena also takes orders from the Prioress. She refuses Boris's proposal, but she attends the great supper which the Prioress has ordered for her seduction and rape because she has a sense of duty. And yet Athena's will and strength will prevail at the end of this tale.

If the women in this story are not puny, what about the men? The old Count of Hophallehus has a grandfather's grandfather who used to lift himself on to a hunting horn in an iron chain and lift his horse too and blow the horn, and the old Count believes that Athena might do the same, but that's beside the point except that they all come of a race of giants. The old Count sees the Prioress, at least, as his equal, if not better. What about Boris? There's nothing of the giant in him. He goes around recalling lines from Don Giovanni and Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, and Robert Longbaum in a book called *The Gayety of Vision* sees in Boris's homosexuality an attempt "to maintain that unchanging state of youth and innocence which we conceive through the cluster of symbols we call the pastoral tradition."

Longbaum also sees in Boris's homosexuality the freshness of the early world . . . a tribute to a high ideal of innocence and love. But Boris is afraid of women. He thinks that women have the power to vaporize men, to take away their vigor, "to turn them into fathers-in-law, authorities on food, and morals." In another passage he thinks: "Women when they are old enough to have done with the business of being women and can let loose their strength must be the most powerful creatures in the whole world." So he takes orders from his aunt, and, later on, he will, we presume, take orders from little Athena. Thus far, the ladies are on top, and the men on the bottom.

But the ladies in this tale, are they free? Athena can fight anyone. She is incorruptible. She cannot be bought or bribed. She incorporates everything into her own vision of what is right or wrong. When the Prioress, for example, tells her that she is surely pregnant, Athena insists that her father will teach the baby astronomy. She is in love with the French Revolution and, indeed, Dinesen's descriptions of Athena make her appear more like an emblem than a girl. She has the eyes of an eagle or a lioness. She looks like a sailor boy ready to swab a deck. She can carry sacks of wheat on her shoulders. One sees her cutting off the heads of tyrants. One sees her as the avenging angel of the French Revolution, a Statue of Liberty, leaving her haunt on Ellis Island and smoking out the enemy—with her torch. One sees her stepping out of a portrait or a poster. But is she free? Can she actually fight wars? Can she leave her father's estate? Can she become his son without becoming a freak? Can she ever get married? Boris's kiss almost kills her. Longbaum thinks Boris and Athena marry at the end of this tale: ". . . because they are bound together in guilt, they are ready for human love." By guilt, he refers to the fact that they have seen the Virgin Prioress undergo her monkey metamorphosis. They are guilty because they have experienced "evil in the face of good." It is my belief that Athena cannot marry except by proxy—she can perhaps marry in name only, but society will demand babies; relatives will be dismayed if there are no children and rumors concerning Boris will fly again. I believe Athena and Boris have achieved a détente. They can arrange something on their own terms because they "have something" on the old Prioress, but it will be Athena who will do the arranging . . . and Boris . . . who will still be able to fight in wars, take a ship to Zanzibar, take a seat in a Reichstag, carry on love affairs in the town, if not in the country, unless, of course, Athena kills him. And she might. But they don't have to marry for Athena to murder Boris. Instead they will have a little brother and sister arrangement, Hansel and Gretel style, and they will throw the witch in the oven for all her Latin quotations, and Gretel will be in charge. She always has been. In charge but not free.

I have said that the old lady calls the shots, that she takes orders from no one, but here's the old lady, bested. How can that be?

Has she no masters before the kiddies take over, at the very end of the tale? The answer is simple. She takes orders from the monkey. And who's the monkey? Longbaum quotes Dinesen as saying once in regard to this story: "When men by way of their conventions have got themselves into difficulties, then let the monkey in; he will find the unattainable solution."

In other words, "let in the forces of Dionysus, the irrational, unconscious, biological forces." Is this the monkey from whom the Prioress will take orders? We recall that when the Count's letter, in which Athena's utter refusal to marry Boris is delivered to the Prioress, the old lady goes to the window, and it looks as if she will throw herself out. We recall that when she returns from the window, it is then that she proposes the bacchanalia to Boris, the dinner of seduction at which Athena will be made drunk with wine and cloves and exotic tales from Europe and Africa, tales of elephants in cages and Duchesses in "*grossesse*," the better to be deflowered, little Athena, by Boris, the melancholy Dane, the poseur, the actor, the homosexual, who needs a love potion to get him ready to take on little Athena. We recall all of this. So the old lady takes her orders from this monkey, this pagan god, not from Christ who teaches compassion? And she's in a Lutheran convent? Ah, is it any wonder everything is such a mad romp in this story?

For if we add up what Johannesson and Longbaum tell us about the monkey, we must call the monkey the Prioress's id and insist that the Prioress takes orders from her id. Her id tries to knock over conventional egos, her own too, only egos won't get knocked down so easily.

Athena, for example, has unconscious as well as conscious needs not to get knocked down. And the Prioress needs to chase the monkey out of her clothes and onto the bust of Immanuel Kant before she can settle down to giving orders again. So sexual politics begins to move away from the simple man-woman relationships, and the battleground becomes bigger than the bedroom, the court, or the parliament, or the nation. The battlefield is thousands of years old, full of cauldrons and trolls and giants keeping the lid on the id, especially where women are concerned. And what does the woman want, I hear you cry? What would a woman like the Prioress desire, perchance? She is first of all a Virgin. Perhaps she desires deflowering. Perhaps, like Athena, she doesn't want or didn't want a man to deflower her. Perhaps like Boris, she preferred the company of her own sex. Perhaps she was once in love with a girl like Athena. She is next a Prioress. Perhaps she desired to be a bishop. She has never done anything with her life except make arrangements for others. She knows everything and goes no place. Why can't she go out to sea and bring home a monkey for Admiral von Schreckenstein? She plants forests, but can she haul timber? So what does she want? She is not so direct about what she desires, as is little Athena Hophallehus, but it is obvious she wants executive action. Now all she gets is vicarious living. She wants to work the seduction of Athena. She wants Athena to be subdued, to be raped, but the Prioress, God bless her, wants both to be raped and to do the raping, if her monkey can manage it. At the same time, if you can believe it, she doesn't really want Boris to succeed.

She wants to bring down Athena who won't be subdued, but she wants to castrate even further young Boris, who has some difficulty playing the traditional male role. She wants, says Philip Slater, "in other words, the worst punishment a Greek male could conceive . . . being set upon by his exact counterpart in the opposite sex, a love-starved but man-hating female." Or almost. The similarities between Boris and Orestes and Athena and what Slater calls the Nurturant Virgin are certainly there. Boris recites Aeschylus to himself on two separate occasions. He recites the prayer to Athena before he tries to seduce her, and second, he thanks Athena after the rape has failed. But the maid whom Boris must violate is also the goddess who must hear his prayer. It is a demonic force which attempts to screw the gods in this little tale of the monkey. The Prioress wants to screw everyone, without exception.

Let us recapitulate the sexual politics of this work: The women are stronger than the men and seemingly call the shots. The women rule the castles and the convents. They plant forests. They even hunt. They could wear armor, if called upon. The men are afraid of them at the same time they respect them. Furthermore it is the men who have insight into the psyche of the ladies; they have leisure for this kind of insight. It is the gals who are driven and possessed. Now a strange irony asserts itself. The men are helpless, effete, sensitive, introspective. The women are dynamic and aggressive. But there will be no babies. The women are demons, and they will not play their traditional roles in life. Still the men are free—free to go on trips to Zanzibar or, less ruggedly, to roam the countryside disguised as puppeteers and sleep in strange farm houses and strange beds, as Boris recalls his escapades in an idyllic mood. The men are free to fight wars, to chop off the heads of tyrants. The ladies, for all the havoc they wreak, are confined, cabined, closeted, cloistered by a society that lays down conventions like chains. It is not men who put down the chains as much as it is institutions, habit, and custom. The ladies have two ways to fight: resistance through direct defiance of the rules as Athena demonstrates. If she must marry, she will kill her husband (and maybe her babies, too). The other path is the monkey. Merely to see the monkey as the double in the Gothic sense or even the demonic force of the id is not enough. The monkey is the story . . . the storyteller. The monkey is the means by which the gods may be screwed, and some of their fire stolen. The Prioress, when she exchanges places with the monkey, is able to wander—to go anywhere, to Zanzibar and eat cloves, to roam the forests of the night, to enter bedrooms and assist at procreation, to rape and be raped, to taste blood, to eat history. Call the monkey—the Prioress's penis. I will call it her pen. The Prioress when she requires the monkey to assist her in impossible situations is making the next chapter possible in a story that could not move or get off the ground. Mind, the Prioress/monkey is not improving on the good work which the gods do on this earth. For who can understand what the gods do or what their purpose is? The Prioress is just creating a little mischief of her own, running riot a little, starting fires under people who just don't feel like burning, no matter that society says they should, or that they must. Call the monkey a Dionysian force, as does Longbaum; see, if you like, both the Dionysian force and Appollonian will in the Prioress as she attempts "to bring about the violation of Athena's virginity . . . and cage the splendid wild and free young girl." But see the Prioress as a woman imprisoned by institutions, not by her own sex or her own biological frailty; but see her as a woman of talent, intelligence, strength, imagination, whom the world has caged, so that she paces her convent like a lioness, so that she is that very elephant who frightens the people of the town of Yandabu, because she too is caged up, confined in a menagerie. Yes, she is that very elephant which she describes in one of her enchanting "dinner" stories to Boris and Athena. See the Prioress as man-hater at the unconscious level. See her fury. See it unleashed. But see it laid to rest because she has had a good romp, through the good offices of her monkey. And nobody has really been hurt . . . in the story, not as they are hurt in life, where the real gods rule. Take a good look at the monkey and you will see Isak Dinesen, Baroness Blixen, Karen Blixen, Tania, Titania, who, Hannah Arendt reminds us, could fall in love with a donkey, even though she remained the wife of the king of the fairies.

"*The Supper at Elsinore*" also begins with landscape, geography, and history, the better for an author to achieve distance:

> Upon the corner of a street of Elsinore, near the harbor, there stands a dignified old gray house, built early in

> the eighteenth century and looking down reticently at the new times grown up around it. Through the long years it has been worked into a unity, and when the front door is opened on a day of north-northwest wind the door of the corridor upstairs will open out of sympathy. Also when you tread upon a certain step of the stair, a board of the floor in the parlor will answer with a faint echo, like a song.

The prose begins four-square and solid enough, but the vocabulary is a trifle more dainty. We have soft verbs like "tread," "will answer"; nouns like "step," "stair," "board," "floor," "parlor," "song," "echo," and the abstraction, "sympathy." There is the second person pronoun, "you," instead of the impersonal, "one."

Later on in the story occurs this memorable passage (It follows the desertion of Adrienne by Morten De Coninck, when the town is left wondering whether Adrienne had yielded to Morten part of the way, all of the way, none of the way.): "Nobody would ever know, for Adrienne never talked of these things: indeed, she could not have done so if she had wanted to. Ever since her recovery from her long illness, she seemed to be a little hard of hearing. She could only hear the things which could be talked about very loudly, and finished her life in an atmosphere of high-shrieked platitudes."

Quite aside from the fact that I wish I could have written that last sentence, what does the passage tell us about the human relationships in this story? The nouns are exceedingly distant: "recovery," "illness," "hearing," "things," "atmosphere," "platitudes," Will the relationships be similarly distant?

Later in the story: "The little fishermen's houses along the road had their doors and windows carefully shut. Sometimes she (Madame Bæck) would see the fishermen themselves, in high boots that came above their knees, a long way out on the ice, where they were cutting holes to catch cod with a tin bait. The sky was the color of lead, but low along the horizon ran a broad stripe the color of old lemon peel or very old ivory." We have "boots," "knees," "fishermen," "cod," and "bait." We have "lemon peel" and "old ivory" and "lead." Rembrandt could have painted this scene. From a distance.

And still later in the story, we have a description of the two sisters De Coninck, after a party they have been giving has broken up. "They were happy to get rid of their guests; but a little silent, bitter minute accompanies the pleasure. For they could still make people fall in love with them. They had the radiance in them which could refract little rainbow effects in the atmosphere of Copenhagen existence. But who could make them feel love? That glass of mental and sentimental alcohol which made for warmth and movement within the old phlebolitic veins of their guests—from where were they themselves to get it?"

We begin to see that feelings are distilled in this story through landscapes and portraits and that feeling has been anesthetized too through words like "cold" and "ice" and "glass" and "refract." There is what we perceive to be the denial of love in this tale. And it is the denial of love that is at the bottom or the foundation of many a Gothic tale, for the Gothic tale is usually the result of screwed up sexuality—as we have indicated before—and this tale is no exception. Once again, there is a strange landscape; there is an old house with "an atmosphere of salt and seaweed." The three De Conincks bear one another "a grave and noble likeness, a likeness to a skull." A ghost walks the old house in Elsinore seven times before he becomes the chief guest at the supper. Finally, there is a suggestion of incest. The story is about two sisters, who never marry because marriage means limiting the possibilities of reality for them, and a brother, who marries five times after he has first deserted Adrienne Rosenstands, "a little bourgeois, an ornamental bird out of the poultry yard at Elsinore." The brother becomes a pirate after he leaves his intended, and after a life full of adventure he is hanged in Havana. The sisters never hear from him except by rumor, seven or seventeen times removed. And then, when the sisters are past fifty and past their prime, the old housekeeper, Madame Bæck, whose memory begins the tale, comes to gather the sisters, who have been residing in Copenhagen, back to Elsinore, where she says their brother has finally returned. The rest of the story is the supper . . . but the outline is enough to suggest that we do not have the traditional Gothic tale in this story, even when we examine the theme of incest more closely.

For Morten De Coninck, after he leaves his bourgeois bride in Elsinore, has a real affair of the heart with a schooner, a schooner which he calls La Belle Eliza. Eliza is the name of his younger sister. Even at 50, or 51, or 52, "fading day by day, into an even more marble-like loveliness," Eliza can still "span her waist with her two long slim hands and moves with much pride, and lightness like an Arab mare."

Morten has never permitted any one of his five wives to board that ship of his, and when he is hanged in Havana, with the halter around his neck, and one minute of life left to him, he decides "to think of La Belle Eliza."

At the end of the story, after Morten's ghost has gone back to hell, Eliza pulls at the streamers of her cap the same way she used to pull at her golden tresses when she was a girl and recalls what her brother spoke his last minute on earth. Fanny, the other sister, has dark hair. But really the sisters are one, and so is the brother. And incest is basically narcissistic.

So once again we have an ungothic Gothic tale because there are no real chills. Nothing is really repressed or suppressed except freedom. Once again we have a story about caged people, but in this tale the women are really caged, like birds. If Adrienne is an ornamental bird, Eliza is like a swan and Fanny has in her heart, "a great mad-wing-clipped bird, fluttering in the winter sunset." And only the men can sail out to the sunset. The women have wings, but they cannot fly. Concerning Eliza, "If at this time she had indeed unfolded a pair of large white wings and had soared from the pier of Elsinore up into the summer air, it would have surprised no one." But Eliza does nothing, nothing at all. And Miss Fanny's "birdlike lightness is now caricatured into abrupt little movements in fits and starts." But the real tension in the story comes from whether or not girls should fly at all or consider sailing into sunsets. In Copenhagen, before the ladies hear that their brother has returned to them as a ghost, they are entertaining several old gentlemen of their long acquaintance, and "the theme under discussion was the question whether if offered a pair of angel's wings which could not be removed, one would accept or refuse the gift." Miss Fanny insists that if she had a chance, she should fly. Her friend, the Bishop, hopes that she would not. He recalls Lilith to her, who seduced two angels into revealing the secret word which opens heaven, and, guess what! After Lilith had the secret from the angels, she flew away to Adam. And from this tale, the Bishop deduces that "where there is too much of the earthly element in a woman, neither husband nor angels can master her." We now hear the Bishop deliver himself of a marvelous ballast stereotype: "In woman, the particularly heavenly and angelic attributes, and those which we most look up to and worship, all go to weigh her down and keep her on the ground. The long tresses, the veils of pudicity, the trailing garments, even the adorable womanly forms in themselves, the swelling bosom and hip, are as little as possible in conforming with the idea of flying." And Fanny replies that she knows that, "And so it is ever the woman whom you gentlemen do not love or worship. . . . And who has had to truss up her skirts to sweep the floor, who chuckles at the sight of the emblem of her very thraldom and anoints her broomstick upon the eve of Walpurgis." Fanny it is who carries around that great mad-wing-clipped bird in her heart, who cries at the end for her brother to take her, take her with him, even though he is going back to hell: "I am cold. The world is bitterly cold around me. I am so cold at night, in my bed, that my warming-pans are no good to me." Fanny it is who understands the price a woman must pay if she chuckles at the sight of a broomstick.

Longbaum sees in this tale a story that glorifies "the romantic life as tragic—triumphant in its failure." He sees the sisters sharing a gloriously intense tragic fate with their brother. Each sister lives through the brother: "Eliza is his pilot star, Fanny shares his ambivalent moral condition." But it is a story in which the brother lives, and the sisters are bitterly cold at night, except that Eliza may be slightly less cold; the incestual warmth burns more in her direction. It is a story that makes incestual love romantic, for the sister who must refuse to sleep with her brother is the force that drives the brother to frenzy and piracy and death by hanging and finally to eternal wandering. It is a story about women who say "yes" and women who say "no." "The earth says yes to our schemes and our work, but the sea says no, and we love the sea ever. And to hear God say no, in the stillness of His own voice, that to us is very good. The starry sky came up, there, and said no to me as well, like a noble, proud woman." That's Morten explaining his destiny to his sisters at the very end of the tale.

Does Dinesen mean that a woman who says "no" is doing God's work? To what does she say "no"—to being caressed? To being used up? To losing her infinite mystery? To being the common other? In her no-saying does she not become the real "other," the inspiration for men to sail ships, to fly? If that is the meaning of a noble woman's "no," then woman certainly plays a conventional role in this tale. I insist that Dinesen protests the kind of life that makes of women this noble other. I insist that Dinesen scorns the gals who say "no" to life, who never leave home, who never take a chance. But she also scorns the little bourgeois hens who say "yes" easily, for such as these have no spice or ginger to them. You can devour them in two bites. Dinesen watches them croak too easily. There is almost a fascist note here . . . the Superman/woman must be free to sail and fly. The weak are expendable. I dunno. I'm uneasy . . .

"*The Poet*," the last of the *Seven Gothic Tales,* is full of exquisite irony.

"Around the name of the little town of Hirschholm in Denmark, there is much romance." That's how the tale begins. And it ends with a murder. The councilor, "the superman in miniature," gets killed not once but twice, once by the real poet who shoots him and twice by Fransine, who calls him contemptuously "poet" before she crushes him to final extinction with a stone she can scarcely lift. But she does it, and Fransine is about to become the councilor's bride. The tale is Gothic, but only in the way architecture is Gothic. It is full of portals, windows, arches, and piers, all the timber and structures aspiring toward the sublime and the infinite. Each story within the greater story is like a chapel, and each chapel contains a little corpse, or the shadow of a corpse. First, there is Queen Sophia Magdalena, who killed a stag on the bank of a lake and built a palace there and named it "Hirschholm" (the home of the stag). Then there is Sophia Magdalena's grandson, a sort of "Caligula in miniature," debauched and heartless at the age of 15. Then, there is the young queen's lover who loses his head . . . actually. Then comes the councilor, and he is the chief story. He has been a widower for fifteen years, a man who when he is alone of an evening does needlework in cross stitch, a man who counts among his treasures the highest, "his recollections of Weimar, where he had lived for two years, and his remembrance of having once lived in the atmosphere of the great heim Geheumerat Goethe." This very councilor's wife also wanted to kill him, with a pair of scissors. But she died after two years of madness and, largely, we conjecture, by her husband's efforts to do her in, for when he is supposed to take her home from the hospital, he pins a flower to his lapel, a gesture calculated to drive his wife to madness, only this time she has no scissors. Then there is Anders Kube, "a young son of the soil, tied to a register, but with the soul of the old Eddas . . ." Anders is the councilor's protégé whether or not he deserves this relationship. Anders sups on porridge, lets the cat drink milk out of his own plate, but he has a mind of his own. If a woman let the cat drink out of her plate, she'd be a witch. There is Anders' lady-love, Fransine, who is scarcely married to a fairly elderly but romantic apothecary before the apothecary dies and leaves her a young widow with a small pension. Finally then there is the councilor's friend, Count August von Schimmelmann.

It is the discussion and the description of this miniature masterpiece, August von Schimmelmann, that we see Dinesen's prose at its most meticulous and august.

Next to painting a picture of which you yourself

> approve the most pleasant thing is perhaps to paint a picture about which the whole world agrees to approve.
>
> He did not enjoy his food or wine much and thought he slept very badly, but to be envied by his neighbors for these goods of life became to him quite an acceptable substitute for real goods.
>
> Now Count Augustus had one real talent and happiness, which other people might well have envied him, but of which he never spoke. He took hashish, and he took a little only, without ever overdoing the pleasure.

The wit and wisdom of these lines has a solemnity and a dignity about them that one associates with the priesthood. A priestess, high to be sure, could deliver these lines, but she would have to be interested in truth, not in shortcuts to the truth and there would have to be in her "a masculine ambition to prove."

The prose throughout *The Poet* asserts. It is exemplary in its firmness. It is rational, even though the perception is somehow eccentric. There is no feeling of embarrassment or self-consciousness in these taut but carefully tuned lines. The prose does not seek an audience for itself. It does not seek to admire its fine clothing, its flounces or its draperies. It seeks an audience for the truth. The speaker of these lines is bigger than man or woman. The speaker has incorporated both sexes, for one sex alone will get in the way of perception. The speaker is androgynous.

This story is the least Gothic of the *Seven Gothic Tales*, but it has much to say about the man-woman relationship that smacks of gargoyles. What does it reveal? How do the men define themselves? And the women? The men, it appears, are all storytellers or arrangers of lives, and the women want to kill them, the more the men step out of their make-believe stories and start pulling strings in real life. Two men die violent deaths in this story and one of these men, the councilor, dies two and a half times. He is our hero. What does he do to deserve this title? He drives two women crazy by treating them like puppets. The only women whom the men in this tale cannot make crazy are queens and housekeepers. Both can act with great dispatch, and they tie their own purse strings. Of the queen: "Then the rancor of the indignant old Dowager Queen encircled the lovers and brought them down. The doctor had his head cut off . . ."

Of the housekeeper: "If she had nothing but a rat to make a ragout of, she would have made a good ragout of it. In his own intercourse with her he always felt that every word and mood of his was somehow taken stock of and kept to be made use of sooner or later." The housekeeper is a mover of people and an arranger of lives, too, but she is not a storyteller. She is more like a witch. But behind every witch is a devil. How easily we see this relationship between the devil and witch in this tale of "*The Poet*." Fransine, the heroine of this little story, is described when we first meet her: "A short, slight young woman who looked like a doll; not like the dolls of the present day which are imitations of the faces and forms of human babies, but like the dolls of old days, which strove, parallel with humanity, toward an abstract ideal of human beauty." In fact, in Fransine, we have the image of the woman as balloon, but the stereotype is somewhat different from Ellmann's conception: "She had what the councilor knew, in the technical language of the ballet, as balloon, a lightness that is not only the negation of weight but which actually seems to carry upwards and make for flight, and which is rarely found in thin dancers—as if the matter itself had become lighter than air so that the more there is of it the better it works." Later we observe Fransine dancing—all by herself—to a Russian musical box, and then it is that our chief storyteller, Councilor Mathesen, decides: "She was not a person to anchor anybody. She might on the contrary have it in her to lift the young man . . . and together these two might fly." Here the balloon quality serves as "the other," woman as divine force and inspiration to man. But woman as doll dissolves at the end of the tale. When Fransine "goes after" Mathesen, her lightness is no longer.

Robert Longbaum has this to say of the transformation from doll to witch: "Her doll's face 'dissolved and ruined by tears' is the counterpart of Anders's death by water. Her body is now witchlike, shrunken to a stick, but she is spiritually no longer a doll, no longer an angel-witch, but a woman." Like the sisters in "*Supper at Elsinore*." Fransines' despair keeps her upright by weighing her to the ground "like lead in wooden figures which children play with." How the little gargoyles weep in this story. But what is it that the Gothic architecture reveals, that the androgynous vision perceives?

Human beings make one another desperate if one is in the position of puppeteer and the other, marionette. Only God may pull strings. The marionettes in this tale are the two lovers, except that Anders is attached to the councilor's pulley by half a string. He is a man and a poet who sees and feels rather than tells and instructs. He pulls his own strings. He even decides on his own suicide. In short, he pulls out when he wants to. The little lady, by comparison, dances for the men in her life, largely as she is told to do. She cannot pull out except by bringing down the whole structure. In this tale women serve men: they may not even fly, ballet-style for their own pleasure. They may fly only when there's a man around to pull them down, to give them ballast or purpose. No wonder the women are all men-haters underneath. Storytellers finally rob ladies of their sons, so much do (didactic) poets play God, who even played with sending His own son back and forth into the universe, much to the Virgin's unhappiness and despair. One has to put up with God, but not with man.

The androgynous vision has also something to say about the role of artist and poet and critic in society. The critic, August von Schimmelmann, just as his name suggests, is slightly moldy. He doesn't know real life when he has it in his palms. He is impotent, stimulated to real pleasure only by hashish, but he doesn't overdo pleasure. And so it is that critics can't hurt very much. They are gentle gargoyles. They stick their tongues out, but they go away. But the would-be poets, those who cannot make a real song or sing purely and sweetly (because real poets cannot live unless they sing), those who chose to make a poem out of life, their own and the lives of others whom they drag onto their stage—of such, beware. Hannah Arendt saw in "*The Poet*" part of Dinesen's early life, when Dinesen herself tried to make a dream come true, by living out a fiction, by pulling others into that fiction. Arendt saw the terrible price of such manipulation in Dinesen's own life, and she saw also the projection of the pain of such manipulation in this last of the Gothic tales. She saw pain become art.

What can we say about the three stories we have examined in the *Seven Gothic Tales* by Isak Dinesen that other critics have not said before? What do these tales reveal, in Annis Pratt's words, "about men and women in relationship to each other within a socio-economic context, that web of role expectations in which women are enmeshed."

Is there in these tales an oblique approach to feminism because of the economic demand of the fiction market? Is there a suggestion that the same writer if she wrote expository prose would present her feminism directly or differently?

Do we see in these tales stereotypes imposed by fiction upon women as well as the stereotypes imposed by critics upon feminine fiction? Do we find male gods and earth mothers? Is there in Dinesen a myth of the heroine? Can we make parallels between her heroines and the heroines we have found in other works of fiction?

Does the woman's femaleness take place over and against the sexual other? To what extent do we see cultural roles externally imposed on the internal androgyneity of the self so that we find distorted sexual relationships like misogyny, man-hating, sadism, masochism?

Finally, with Lillian S. Robinson do we have a consciousness of women being *the other* in a male-dominated society? Is there a sense of oppression, an awareness of how idealization serves oppression?

A brief sketch of Isak Dinesen is now in order.

> "The death of her father by his own hand, the unrequited love of her wrecked marriage and the incurable disease which was the tragic result of this mistake . . ."
>
> "She had several artistic talents; she tried her hand as painter, acted in many of the situations of life with the true talent of an actress, but she was first and foremost a born writer and poet. . . . She was to undergo nearly inhuman sorrows before the secret reserves of her soul broke through and conquered her inhibitions."
>
> (Lasson and Svendsen:
> *The Life and Destiny of Isak Dinesen*)

And these nearly inhuman sorrows? They begin with the death of a father, who was heard to mumble before he shot himself, "I'll have to do it, I'll have to do it." Why would a man "have to do it," unless he feared disgrace and unhappiness or inhuman pain? It was Dinesen's belief that her father was suffering from an incurable illness. The illness was no doubt syphilis. Later, as the Baroness Blixen, she was herself to fall victim to this disease, the gift of her husband, who was scarcely aware he had the affliction and was dispensing it with generosity not only to his wife but to other ladies of his acquaintance.

> "After the first year of marriage, Karen Blixen had to go home to Denmark to be treated for the venereal disease which she had contracted through no fault of her own. Too much time had elapsed before she set out; the journey took very long because of war conditions; and when she arrived in Denmark it took time to make discreet arrangements, which Karen Blixen insisted on, in order to keep her mother, with her Puritan upbringing, in ignorance of the situation. Karen Blixen herself believed that the long hard years of illness she had to endure later in life were a result of this disease. It was with open eyes that she entered upon the same fate which she thought had threatened her father."
>
> (Lasson and Svendsen)

But her marriage was rotten even before the disease. And Hannah Arendt explains why: "She planned to act out in her life a sequel to her father's story. The latter had concerned a fairy princess whom he had known and loved before his marriage and who had died suddenly at the age of twenty. The girl had been a cousin of her father's. . . . And the daughter's greatest ambition was to belong to the other side of her father's family—Danish high nobility to boot. When she fell in love it was with another second cousin of hers, Hans Blixen Finecke, who would have been the dead girl's nephew. And since this cousin took no notice of her, she decided to marry his twin brother, Bror." (See "The Poet").

Dinesen never loved her husband to begin with. He needed her. She needed to get away. Intellectually, "He didn't know whether the Crusades dated before or after the French Revolution." And he was a liar and unfaithful to her. The irony of her marriage, however, is that she asked for it. She was determined to be a baroness for several reasons, but among them was the need "to make an old story come true . . .to realize an idea, to anticipate her life's destiny." She wanted to make her life a romance, I suppose. And the romance ended in disease and then divorce (Baron Blixen went on to make a second marriage and was incidentally a great safari man, pal and guide to Ernest Hemingway, who ironically felt that the Nobel Prize awarded to him in the 'thirties should rightfully have gone to Isak Dinesen.) At any rate, when Dinesen married Bror Blixen they went to live in British East Africa, shortly before the outbreak of World War I. Africa became her second great love, a land still wild, where natives, feudal servants, would follow five feet behind and watch for the "mem sahib." Dinesen was an aristocrat in Africa, even after she divorced the Baron. And once again, make-believe got in the way of reality. She decided to stay on the African farm, several thousand feet high, and grow coffee beans. She persisted in her conviction that her intuition would tell her what was best to do. She lost the farm. She lost the money that her family had invested in her dreams. She was still living that dream of being a princess, a baroness, surrounded by her good and loyal servants, whom she admired and taught to read . . . when she lost her farm and Denys Finch-Hatton died in a plane crash. Denys Finch-Hatton was the third love in her life, and this love overshadowed even the first two. Finch-Hatton was a man who could fly without an airplane. He had wings; and Dinesen, who was two years older than he and met him and loved him while she was in her mid-thirties, lived in fear that she might appear to want more than his companionship. Donald Hannah, speaking about one of her unpublished stories, "Carnival," says: "One of the characters says about her husband that she is really deeply in love with him, but she is desperately unhappy because if he knew what she felt, he would dislike it intensely." To me the most telling lines from the quoted text are the following: "He believes that it is his car, and his aeroplane and his collections that I love. But it makes me sad always to deceive him." The obituary in the *London Times,* August 1931, is also revealing: "He (Finch-Hatton) was different from everyone else. Always and everywhere absolutely himself, he was neither selfish nor self-centered, yet he seemed always to do everything that he wanted to do and never to do anything that he did not want. Anyone else leading such a life would have deteriorated. He remained considerate, sympathetic, humorous, cultured, and always had time to spend in small acts of kindness for the most unlikely people of any type. He was an ideal companion at the Russian Ballet or at a game of chess, while, of course, in times of difficulty or danger in the open air, he was obviously supreme . . ."

When Dinesen returned to Denmark in 1931, she had lost everything . . . but what a life! What a royal screwing life had given her—and largely because she was a woman, but she never thought so. She was proud of her life and at the end of her days, she felt she had been blessed. She had been blessed because she could endure and because she was able to establish a new identity, Isak Dinesen, through whom she could examine her own pain, the pain which fate had inflicted on her when she sought too hard to take charge of her own destiny. To this extent, the pain which she examined in her own life was the pain which crosses all those who take on the gods as adversaries—men and women. It is my feeling, however, that the pain she did not fully examine, the pain that she accepted, the pain that she swallowed whole, was the pain or the "blessing" that she was a woman. As a man she need not have suffered so much. "Woman is" but "man acts," Johannesson quotes her as saying in 1953. Even Johannesson concedes that these views were undoubtedly old fashioned: "To Dinesen man is the being who acts. A man's center of gravity, the quality of his being consists of what he accomplishes and does in life. The woman, on the other hand, has her center of gravity in what she is. As artists men create works of art while women become or are works of art." The question one must ask at this point is how Dinesen defined herself.

First of all, I believe she would have said she was a woman. Next she would have said she was a friend of Africa. And third she would have said she was a storyteller, not a writer. If you asked her whether the storyteller "is" or "does," I suspect she would have said both. But when does the storyteller become the writer and finally the artist? When did the woman and the friend to Africa become more than the storyteller? I believe she would have said that she became the artist when she lost both of these worlds, the world of the woman and Africa. She lost one life to find another, but in the second life, the life she no doubt shunned when she was a "doer" and an actor and a shaper of events, she became reflective and passive and accepting. But in insisting that she was only a storyteller, was she not perhaps accepting a conventional view of herself? For how many doers or artists lived as fully, as heroically as she did before she retired from the arena to write . . . Some artists never enter the arena at all. I believe that Dinesen defined herself the way the men in her world would have defined her. She was not yet liberated from their censorship, from their rubber stamp.

The questions I pondered before I began this sketch now require some tentative answers based on a reading of the three stories from the *Seven Gothic Tales.*

What do these tales reveal about men and women in relationship to each other within a socio-economic context . . . the web of expectations in which women are enmeshed?

"The Monkey," "Supper," and "The Poet" are stories of strangulation. The women in these tales have no place to go, so tight are the conventions which restrict their movements. Were the ladies required to help win the bread and the butter, they would have more freedom to move, but Dinesen is interested in what makes men imprison themselves as well as their women. Myths imprison, conventions imprison more than economics. When such forces are at work, men and women become bloodless and impotent. They become wraiths or giants or dolls or witches, serpents, or ghosts, or homosexuals.

Is there in these tales an oblique approach to feminism because of the economic demands of the fiction market?

Not a chance. Dinesen wrote to make money once, but I don't believe her people were any the less cockeyed. Well, maybe a little less cockeyed. The book, *The Angelic Avengers,* resembles Austen's *Northanger Abbey.*

Is there a suggestion that the same writer if she wrote expository prose would present her feminism directly or indirectly?

In 1953 Dinesen insisted that "a woman is, a man acts." In 1959 she told Carson McCullers that she would like to meet Marilyn Monroe—not Arthur Miller; Marilyn Monroe. Why? For heaven's sake, why? Did she see in Marilyn a woman who "is"? McCullers reports that Tania (friends called Dinesen *Tania*) spoke and "Marilyn, with her beautiful blue eyes, listened in a 'once-upon-a-time' way . . ." Tania danced with Monroe and "spoke sharply" to Arthur Miller when Miller questioned her about her diet of champagne and oysters. In 1962 Tania listened for the last time to Denys's favorite Handel Oratorio and joined her father for eternity on Ewald's Hill. Had she lived another ten years, she would have had to come to grips with Marilyn's death. "Woman is, man acts." Marilyn couldn't tell her story. I'll wager Tania could have told it. It would have killed her all over again. But the answer to the original question: I have to examine the text of her talks and her radio addresses before I commit myself to the proposition that Dinesen wasn't quite ready for feminist criticism. I'm afraid she wasn't.

Do we see in these tales stereotypes?

Do we find male gods and earth mothers?

And witches, shrews?

Formlessness: passivity: instability: confinement: peity: materiality: spirituality: irrationality: compliancy: Ellmann: "Woman is with nature . . . man with art . . . even if art is considered superior to nature, nature in its place is an agreeable phenomenon."

What emerges from these tales is that art had better not fool around with nature. The gods have the final answer. And the man who attempts to impose too many stereotypes on a woman is going to get a stone on his head. Furthermore, the woman who accepts these stereotypes, especially confinement and passivity ends up a poor, cold ghost herself. And yet a certain amount of compliance there must be—lest we have witches. There is also the understanding, sometimes understated, that women do not spring into witches out of their own natural being. Men drive women up the wall and onto their broomsticks.

Male gods—earth mothers.

Too much androgyny in Dinesen for this kind of crap. What you *do* find are gods and goddesses and mothers of Christ.

Is there in Dinesen a myth of the heroine?

Yes, there is. It is her credo. Ultimately, her heroines have to face what life dishes out. If they choose life, then they must accept the trials. Johannesson sees in Dinesen's flower images this distinction between men and women, hero-heroines, that the flower is what it is insofar as it fulfills its own nature. Thus the rose is a popular metaphor for Dinesen's ladies. Hannah Arendt sees it "formally beautiful in its intricate design and finished and rounded perfection." But if a woman is like a rose, her intricate design must mean something other than artifice. Woman has a purpose and a destiny and this purpose is to accept, to accept the story of her days. There cannot be a heroine without a story. There must be a man to desire that rose or even to pass it by.

Thomas Whissen in *Isak Dinesen's Aesthetics* says: "What Isak Dinesen sees in the greatest art is that characters do not achieve heroic proportions except as they fulfill the demands of the plot." The story has to help the characters discover who they are and what they are can be found only in relation to another question, "What is their destiny?" The character who asserts an identity without regard to change rejects his destiny and loses his identity. Very often then in Dinesen's stories there must needs be a hero first so that the heroine may become his prize, his rose. But if the men run away from their destiny, if they cannot change, they will not know a rose if they find one—or else they will destroy the rose. But the point I want to make is that heroines can and do exist in Dinesen's stories (not so much in these three—except for Fransine) as in the other tales. . . . The key word is acceptance. But acceptance from God the Father . . . unless one sees the Trinity as one and Indivisible. In this respect one sees Clytemnestra accepting her fate or Agave or Lady Winchelsea or Sylvia Plath. Dinesen's heroines *are* Gothic.

Does the women's femaleness take place over and against the sexual *other*?

Yes, in "The Poet" this occurs. But in "The Monkey" and, to a lesser extent, in "Supper," one gets scrambled eggs, distorted sexual relationships because the women want to fly and take off as much as the man's maleness desires this flight. But, yes, we do have a consciousness of women being the other in a male dominated society. I cannot deny that I have this consciousness loud and clear. I have a real sense of oppression, too, an awareness of how idealization of this submerged role serves to further the oppression. And in Dinesen's life too. But out of this mangle, out of this struggle comes a most exquisite art. Out of this rack and torture comes a real androgyny, too. Whatever Dinesen professed the role of women to be, however much she accepted the bitter pill of "Thy will be done," she did leave Copenhagen, she hunted lions in Africa, she survived syphilis, she loved a man passionately after she divorced her first husband, and she still knew and felt what it was to be caged. She was so caged, she wasn't even certain she should earn her bread as storytel-

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ler, but she had no other way to live. How could she survive illness and the death of the men she loved except through her art? But how could she live as a human being in 1934 unless she earned her bread? She had to live out Part II of her destiny, breadwinner and artist. But in her art men would pay a good part of the price of her bereavement and pain. Because she accepted her destiny so very well, because she was such a good sport and all of that, her people must be peculiar, their landscapes must be twisted, their lives distilled to the very essence. Her people are aristocrats because the bourgeoisie is too conscious of safety ever to think big or live big. But when the pain of bigness became too much to bear, she would let the monkey in and play God gone completely berserk, stepping on everyone in his wild and heedless path, no one mortal counting for very much in his wild scheme of things. The monkey is a pagan god to be sure, but it is only through a bacchanalia that a man can finally accept gross injustice and pain. He needs to be made drunk. Isak Dinesen, Karen Blixen, in her own physiognomy grew more and more to resemble this parched parchment of a monkey. She knew the good of letting the lid off the id. Had she lived another ten years, had her flesh been stronger, who knows. What we do know is that as storyteller she could be man and woman and god.

—*Florence C. (Flossie) Lewis*

CAROL HEBALD

THE MOON LEAKS RED

The moon leaks red
On Nobodaddy in the garden;
A leaf depends.

A something like a shame
Tugs childish at my bars;
I fumble at my prayers,
My wisdom loses way.

I hate the needy me
That preys on God,
Too appalled to stir
Into the raving tide,

Drills silently for God,
Wild beyond the finite,
Till Christ appears in vision,
Mute, in the light.

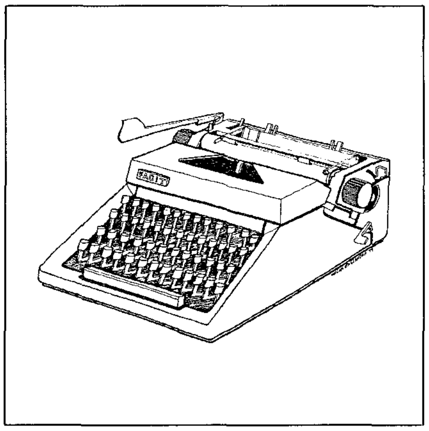
I live in a dreamworld by choice:
I am sorry,
Slightly embarrassed,
And ravished.

OUT-TAKES

Matters of Life & Death

Listen! A story appeared in *Variety* in December. The literary agency Bloom, Beckett, Levy & Shorr reported taking on 26 new writers the past year. It was, it said, collectively proud, because it was agency policy to read every finished script submitted. Well now, BBLS got three dozen submissions a week, about "one in a hundred being promising." And, by gosh, "the firm's 6 agents also speak at universities, encouraging writers to submit material." Well then, there's this screenplay of which I am co-author (which is damn good—but not bankable according to industry standards). I have tried agents; it's hard to get them to read ***unknown*** material, but periodically, when I catch sight of a potential, I send it out. And it's the end of 1978 ("Edge of the Sword" was written in 1975), BBLS is asking . . . so why not? It is sent with a Stamped Self-Addressed Envelope (the industry eats scripts). A week later I receive the following: ". . . great sadness . . . renounce the policy . . . no longer able to read unsolicited manuscripts . . . work load of reading . . . regrettably announce . . . sincerely wish you the best of luck . . . finding someone who will . . . Sincerely, Bloom, Beckett, Levy, Shorr." Now, when B.B.L. & S. appear at the universities do they have egg on their faces? What do *they* say? *Caveat emptor.*

* * *



In December of 1977, Jack Klugman, star of NBC's "Quincy," sold a half hour sitcom pilot to CBS and announced his going over the heads of the members of the Writers' Guild to recruit scripting talent from college campuses—all this according to *Variety*. Nobody he said he talked to, be it Bobby Blake or Peter Falk or anybody else in episodic television, "can say they found a good writer. They're worth their weight in gold—in *gold!*" Klugman wants to go search the institutions of higher learning. "I'm going to colleges to get kids who are hungry and want to write. I'll say, 'Okay, you can't serve your apprenticeship better than this. You'll be on the firing line!' "

* * *

From Dave Kaufman's column, *On All Channels*, (*Variety*, March, 1978). "First comes the word: that's the message the Writers' Guild has been selling for years to the Hollywood Community, but it doesn't really need a hard sell because the knowledgeable producers, stars, directors and executives know there's nothing quite as important in a project as the script." Kaufman goes on to opine that TV producers and *exex* bewail the shortage of both good words and their word-smiths. Hearing it from the exex again: the prices for writers go up, but not the quality. Then in his column in April Kaufman reported the reaction from the anguished writers, the cries for vindication—the what-do-you-expects, to quote from his quote of one of them that "all of these people have to be satisfied . . . the indignities and artistic inconsistencies . . ."

* * *

Apparently, a Student Studio which was set up in July of 1977 as a non-profit company with great hullabaloo—a $100,000 campus advertising campaign, and full page ads in UCLA and USC student newspapers—has, as of November of 1978, died. According to Will Tusher in *Variety*, "another growing, if not hallowed, industry assumption—that college campuses, notably those with film schools, are the natural and untapped seedbed of fresh writing talent—has gone down in flames." What Student Studio (Steve Jaffe) solicited was original screenplays, treatments, and/or outlines, and in return offered a paid position on the production staff, Writer's Guild scale, profit participation promises—all this, according to him, "in effort to meet the industry's need for original motion picture and television material." Which, from USC and UCLA, at least, was not deliverable. "We found," Jaffe said, "that most people were imitating what they felt to be movie style." And Jaffe—along with an apparent preoccupation with some co-production deals—was mightly discouraged by 20 scripts and 15 ideas. So much so, in fact, that he didn't wait for what might come in from other colleges around the country; he folded. But said he does hold out the possibility that something *might* have come from the real world, outside the geopolitical region of Hollywood, and its narrow narcissism . . . but still he *folded,* and *Variety* gives no further information. Perhaps it was lack of sticktoitiveness. "*Sic itur ad astra.*"

* * *

It is said that (along with the president's Calvinism and the danger to public morality in T & A ["Tits and Ass"] on television) the current censorship dicta are killing spontaneity and reality in scripts. To wit (story in *Variety* in December, 1978): in a script being considered by CBS called "Shroud Society" there's a scene where two cars roar out of a motel parking lot, almost knocking down the motel maid who is righteously dismayed and "shouts angrily." "Please be certain," CBS says, "that as maid 'shouts angrily' we do not hear expletives in any language, be it Spanish, Italian, etc." (She should say, perhaps, *felbercarb* as they do on "Battlestar Galactica"?) Or, later in the same script, a lady named Rena is trying to seduce the main-man (hopefully to be played by Charles Bronson). "You'll enjoy it . . . and if you don't . . . you can always use the exercise," the lady says. The bit about *exercise* is to be deleted, so the Program Practices Department decrees.

* * *

Then, in a story datelined January 4, 1979, *Variety* slugs it: "Fox TV Comedy Writers Shop Director Pleased With Results." Initiated last summer, with more than 5000 inquiries from interested parties, the result is five teams of 2 writers each, all now in the middle of their third option period, working as team writers on a weekly salary. The Director of Comedy Development at the studio, Lynn Roth, reports the program under her aegis "has exceeded my expectation. I'd hoped that at least one good team would come out of the workshop, but . . . so far, I have five." And none of them had ever before written material that was produced professionally. That, in fact, was a limitation imposed on entrance to the program—the aspiring writers would not have ever sold a script or story to motion pictures or TV.

* * *

Not one for a soft voice (apparently) Joseph Wambaugh, ex-LAPD turned *heavy* novelist (all of which are or will be movies or television—giving him a lot of *clout!*) spoke his unhappiness with the *rewrite* of his *The Choirboys* by Lorimar Productions: "(Felbercarb!) Hollywood moguls are like hookers. Virtually every hooker I ever arrested or knew had a pimp who would kick the *(felbercarb)* out of her whether she needed it or not. If he didn't, she'd find one who would. These Hollywood types are like that. The more scorn you heap on them the more they pursue you. I've dealt with every kind of bum and criminal there is and they all have more integrity than some of the people in Hollywood."

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>
> —Advertisement in *Variety*

* * *

Anthony Hopkins, on the personal appearance tour, talking, haveing played a virtuoso performance in the movie "Magic," in effect two roles in one, the dummy Fats, and Corky, his master:

"I was 17 years of age and had nothing better to do so I went to the YMCA—I wasn't an easy joiner—I didn't mix . . . My father suggested it, for me to try and meet some friends. There was a play group. I joined it and I enjoyed it—and twenty-three years later here I am.

"I always wanted to come to America because I was influenced by a student who introduced me to a kind of system of work . . . *the method* . . . which the British at the time chose not to explore. In my arrogance I believed it was a facile way of working in England . . . I was always very rebellious . . . I never did fit in. I don't go along with my own belief any more—I think there's some superb work being done in England. What is wonderful, and what I've had to discover is that I don't have any more fixed ideas. Intuition, Stanislavsky always advocates, but he also always talks about technique . . . it's a matter of degree, I guess—I think intuitive logic is very exciting. I like to work intuitively, rather than trust my very inadequate intellect . . . .

"I try not to listen to negatives any more; to paraphrase Goethe, when you decide to do something infinite power is given to do it.

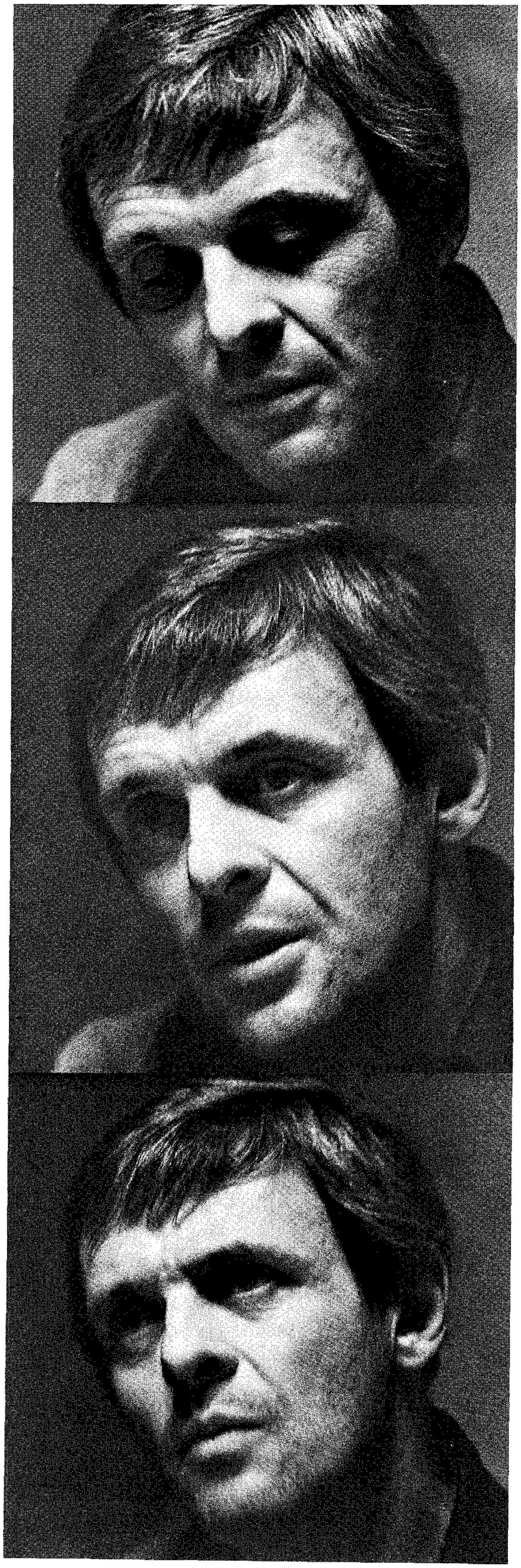
"I used to analyze everything—analyze all the time, but for my own peace of mind I had to let go of it, trusting that I am able to do it. So what I did for that role was approach it technically. I learned the whole part, Fats and Corky, like a monologue with the hunch that eventually the voice of Fats was going to be discovered. I did all kinds of things to aid myself—like listening to Don Rickles records over and over. I wanted to get a kind of rhythm—that kind of coarse fast rhythm. I learned it parrot fashion, and one day the voice came. I didn't question it. I worked with a dialogue coach to get a kind of Brooklyn sound—I learned it at speed, going over and over it, like a machine-gun, the two voices became a reflex . . . .

"I've just come up with a theory—a kind of common sense thing that's taken me years to try and understand. That when a part is written—well written, well constructed—the common sense, the line of the part, you follow the intelligence, and the part is going to do it for you. So I allowed my own background to come out of it. As a child—the only child and all that—I felt very out of it for most of my life—I used to be a mimic, which is a way of bridging the gap between myself and others.

"I know it may sound very trite and facile to some people, but I think acting really is a sort of craft—a technique that releases other kinds of energies. I don't understand it. It's like the act of writing, it becomes reflex. Intuition has its own particular logic. When I'm doing it I believe all the time that I'm it. It's the only way it can work. You have to believe at the moment that it's happening for the first and last time."

Remembrance of Things Past

My father died on or about 11:05 (E.S.T.) 10 January, nineteen hundred seventy-nine. I knew it was coming; I had visited him in November after I heard, flying east to raw gray smoky New Jersey. To Princeton in Mercer County, one of the black belt of counties in what they call "The Garden State," which collectively have a higher incidence of some kinds of cancer than any other place in the world. First my mother, then my father died of cancer. Two peers who still live there have survived its onslaught. I can think of ten other people who died. Nothing else, it seems, kills people there. They told me at the end he was pretty wasted, and I am glad I didn't look at him. In November he was gaunt, but it was still his face, and that I would better remember. And I have also this vision—a kind of dream—of him sitting naked on a rolling gurney, legs over the side, smiling at me as he goes by. In his house in January I looked for some message from him. In November, sitting together in his living room, we talked haltingly—we never did a lot of easy talking—but the fact of his impending death was never mentioned. I felt it should have been, but he didn't bring it up, and I didn't either . . . perhaps I was wrong not to. You ask yourself questions like that, the kinds of questions parents ask—shouldn't I—should I? From what I have been told he never talked about it with anyone. I am not sure he even accepted it himself. Should he have? I don't know, except the transition for us, the survivors, might have been easier. There is some virtue—some release—I think, for both sides, in getting to say good-bye. One night in November he went slowly upstairs. *Heartbreaking*—he had been a powerful man, an All-American guard at Yale University, the days of "wooden stadiums and iron men." I sat alone in the living room and looked at it. He had decorated it. There is a picture and epitaph to my mother, framed, above the mantle; the walls are lined with books. It is a comfortable room, but that night in November, looking, it was the room of a dying man—the house of a dying man: empty matchbooks, a film of dust, the in-kitchen rattle of lackadaisical house helpers, the lousy food they cook. It seems suddenly a metaphor for what the process of death is: disconnections-disorder-systems breaking down. The bowels break down; the mind wanders. One of those nights in November I sat in that room and thought: this is the last time I'll sit here while he is alive upstairs . . . another night I noticed by his chair a paperback book, the inner game of golf or something (he was an inveterate and pretty good golfer all his life). There's a dedication inside the cover. "To the Coach," it read. (He called people *Coach*.) When I riffled through it, he had underlined passages. In November he was going back to the course, by God! Also in November, when I would be out talking to people, making arrangements, each day he would walk slowly up the mile or so to his office in town—slowly-haltingly-obdurate. They told me my father was known all along the main street, Nassau Street, by all the store owners—by everybody. He will be missed. It was just before Christmas, the night the doctor decided he had to go back to the hospital. He was getting out of control at home. The mind wanders. He escaped from the house, taking no coat. It was three a.m. and it was December and it was cold. A mile he walked up to the Borough Police station—I'm sure to report for duty. In the '30s when he lived in New York City he was a 1st Lieutenant in the 101st Cavalry, Squadron A of the New York National Guard. During World War II he had been a lieutenant in the Civil Defense Reserve Police. In his jewel box I found his police badge. Sure, he was just going up there to report for duty. The regimental motto of Squadron A was *boutez en avant.* Push forward. The cops all liked him, and that night they gave him a cup of coffee and the doctor was called and, personally, he came and took my father to the hospital. That walk was his last trip. That was the beginning of the beginning of the real



end. From California I never spoke to him again. Absurdly, a crippled ship, adrift in the strong tides of the Golden Gate, dropped her anchor on the telephone cable connecting Marin County to the rest of the country. That happened Christmas Eve and service wasn't restored until the following Saturday. His mind wanders, I was told. Twelve days later he gave up the ghost. In November, when I left to go to the airport, it was early morning and he waved to me from the door. Already, I thought suddenly then, already he's like a ghost, ephemeral behind the glass of his storm door. In January I looked for messages. I sat in that chair which now, in fact, was suddenly called *my chair*, and I remembered what I had thought about on the visit in November. And I looked for messages. I found myself looking like him in mirrors, coughing like he did, moving as he had. And I looked for messages. I found on the wall above his bureau (framed) a birthday card I had sent him. It depicted two detailed line drawings of Plains Indians on the cover. It was dated 7/27/77—his 75th birthday—and inside was a poem signed by an Oglala Sioux medicine man who was born in 1863 and died in 1950.

Grandfather, behold me!
Grandfather, behold me!
I held my pipe and offered it to You!
That my people may live!

Grandfather, behold me!
Grandfather, behold me!
I give to you all these offerings,
That my people may live!

Grandfather, behold me!
Grandfather, behold me!
We who represent all the people,
Offer ourselves to You,
That we may live!

–Black Elk

To this card, dated 8/6/77, my father had written a poem in answer.

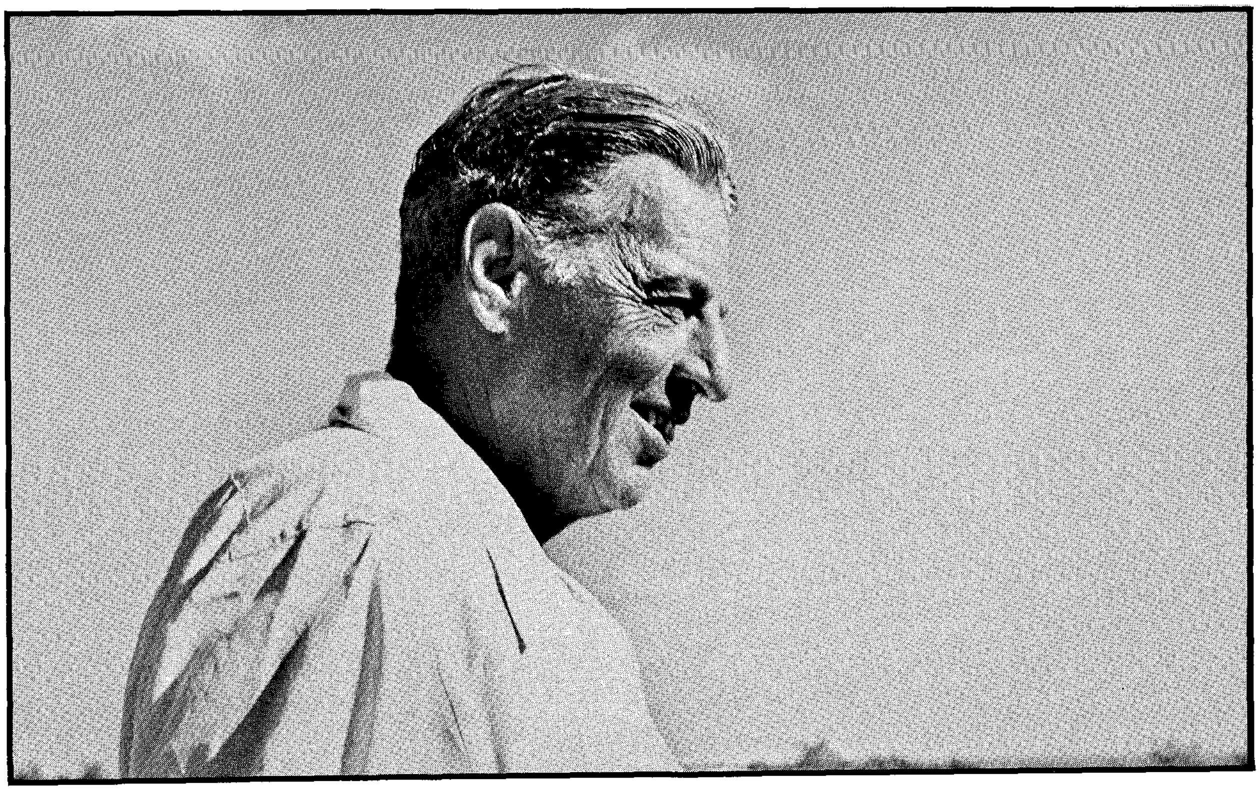
My Son–I behold you
My Son–I behold you
I accept your pipe as offered
that your people may live

My Son–I behold you
My Son–I behold you
Keep on giving me your offerings
that your people may live

My Son–I behold you
My Son–I behold you
I will do my utmost
That you may live
Grandfather

He sent me that in '77, but he had kept a copy and framed it, altogether, on the wall above his bureau. If I am a person of the sun, who likes deserts and heat, you can have the rain, and people who walk in it for fun I've never understood. To me, when it rains, it's like the sky is weeping, so it poured in California the day after my father died. And a faint pale brief sun shone on the Sunday in New Jersey, four days later, when the memorial service was held. For which he had chosen the words: the 139th Psalm, a poem my mother wrote. That day I couldn't register the words, and I wanted to, but couldn't, sing the hymns. I should have requested a cavalry song; my father was always a horseman—a trooper. I remember things and absorb the cold yet satisfying grandeur of a not large Episcopal Church, the dusky light, the voices of the clergy (a man and woman), the cadre of men, proud, a little stooped, his chosen friends, the honorary pallbearers, seated in a body. There is no pall to bear, which I had thought was right and had so ordered. Tuesday his ashes in a faintly striated black marble urn, were buried in a private ceremony. It was cold and getting to be dusk when we walked away. And two days later I call the superintendent of the cemetery to order the year put on the already existing copper plaque. That plaque with his name and no closing date has been there since my mother's was put down two years ago. On Sunday, after the service, people came back to his house (*my house?*) for a wake. That too he requested: "to have a drink to Pat and me . . . no gloom, please!" *Boutez en avant! Requiescat in Pace.*

–Lawrence Sturhahn



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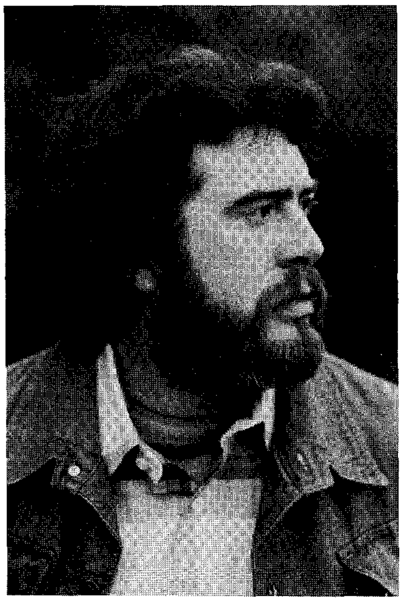

Photo: Jayne Anne Phillips

Joe David Bellamy was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1941. He attended Duke University as a pre-medical student, received a B.A. from Antioch College and an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. His poetry has appeared widely in such magazines as *Paris Review, Iowa Review, Ploughshares, Prairie Schooner,* and *Poetry Northwest.* He now lives in upstate New York and teaches at St. Lawrence University, where he also edits *fiction international. Olympic Gold Medalist* is his first book of poetry.

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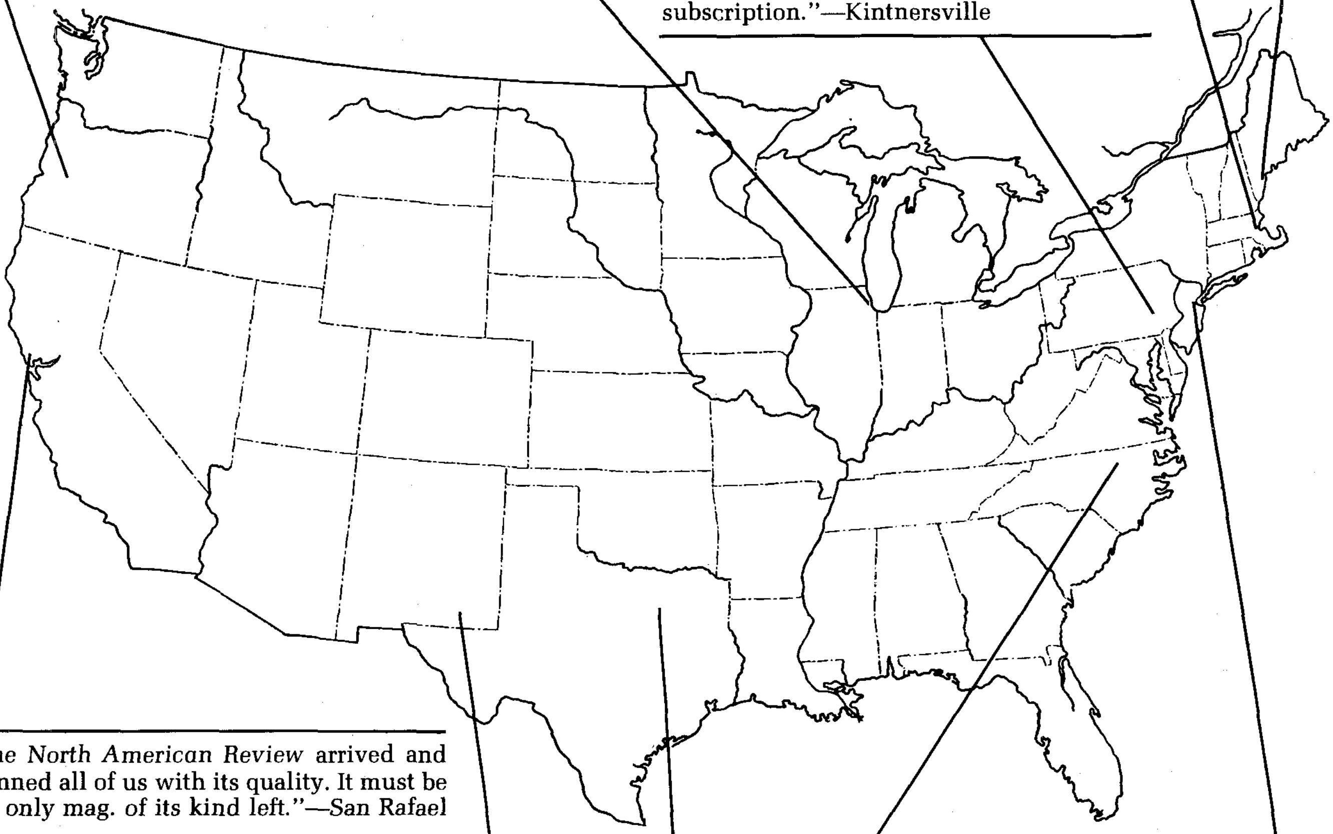

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